

**“One of the hidden
geniuses of the
twentieth century.”
Colm Tóibín**

**Clarice
Lispector**

New translation by Idra Novey

**Água
Viva**

ÁGUA VIVA

Clarice Lispector

Translated from the Portuguese by Stefan Tobler

Introduction by Benjamin Moser

Edited by Benjamin Moser

Contents

[Breathing Together by Benjamin Moser](#)

[ÁGUA VIVA](#)

Introduction: Breathing Together

THE BREVITY AND APPARENT SIMPLICITY OF *ÁGUA VIVA* MASK SEVERAL YEARS OF Clarice Lispector's struggle to write it. A first version, entitled *Beyond Thought: Monologue with Life*, was already complete by July 12, 1971, when Clarice met Alexandrino Severino, a Portuguese professor at Vanderbilt University. She gave him a copy of the manuscript for translation into English, along with specific procedural instructions. He was not to budge so much as a single comma.

She was still "drying out the book," she told Severino, before handing it over to her publisher. But a year later, in June 1972, the book had not appeared, and Severino wrote to ask if she still wanted him to proceed.

When she answered, the manuscript had another name. "As for the book—I interrupted it—because I thought it wasn't achieving what I wanted to achieve," she wrote. "I can't publish it as it is. Either I am not going to publish it or I am going to work on it. Maybe in a few months I will work on the *Loud Object*."

The process of "drying out," Severino noticed when he finally saw the subsequent version, consisted mainly in removing its many explicit biographical references. But *Loud Object*, weighing in at 185 pages, was even longer than *Beyond Thought* (151). The manuscript seems to capture an everyday voice utterly unrefined by literary or fictional artifice. Clarice reminisces about her pets and goes into great detail about her favorite flowers, one of which sends her back to her origins in Eastern Europe, a reference surprising because so rare: "The sunflower is the great child of

the sun. So much that it is born with the instinct to turn its enormous corolla toward its creator. It doesn't matter if it's a father or mother. I don't know. Is the sunflower a masculine or feminine flower? I think masculine. But one thing is for sure: the sunflower is Ukrainian."

If at times this manuscript is as brilliant and inspired as the mature work of a great artist, at other times it is as dull and uninspired as a housewife's neighborly chitchat. Clarice often claimed that she was a simple housewife, and in this formless, plotless conversation, an unfiltered "brainstorm"—she uses the English word—in which she types anything and everything that pops into her mind, that is often exactly how she sounds.

She complains, for example, about money, another constant topic: "I'm back. The day is still very nice. But things are very expensive—I say this because of the price the man asked to fix [the record player]. I have to work hard to get the things I want or need." She defends herself against her mythology: "I mean to say that my house is not metaphysical. They can hardly forgive bad food. All I do is open and close my purse to hand out money to buy things. . . . Besides eating we talk a lot about what is going on in Brazil and in the world. We talk about what clothes are appropriate to different occasions." And: "I sleep too and how! My readers think I am always an insomniac. But that's not true. I sleep too."

Loud Object's direct and confessional tone, the sense it offers of Clarice's unfiltered conversational voice—she frequently pauses to answer the phone, light a cigarette, or pour herself a drink of water—can distract the reader from the reality that it, too, is a fiction. In *Beyond Thought* she bluntly addresses the reader: "Here's what's happening. I had been writing this book for years, spread out in newspaper columns, without noticing, ignorant of myself as I am, that I was writing my book. That is the explanation for readers who recognize this: because they have already read it in the paper. I like the truth."

She apparently did not like the truth enough to refrain from retouching it in the second draft. The critic Lícia Manzo points out that *Loud Object* contains a new, and completely contradictory, explanation: "This book, for obvious reasons, was going to be called *Beyond Thought*. Many pages have already been published. But when I published them I didn't mention that they had been extracted from *Loud Object* or *Beyond Thought*."

It does not particularly matter whether Clarice took her newspaper articles and stitched them into a manuscript or whether she plundered a manuscript for material for her journalism. Yet the two conflicting explanations emphasize that in *Loud Object* she is still wrestling, and somewhat guiltily, with fictionalization.

Perhaps the least satisfying part of *An Apprenticeship or The Book of Pleasures*, the novel that preceded *Água Viva*, was the way Clarice extracted large chunks from her newspaper columns and dropped them, often unmodified, into her novel. The process could work flawlessly, but sometimes the pieces felt undigested. In *Loud Object* she does the same thing. She must have known that these reminiscences were out of place, since almost none reached the final book. In the drafts, doubts about how to use her personal experience lead to repeated meditations on the creative process itself.

Throughout *Loud Object* she is aware that she is doing something completely different, but she does not yet know what or how: “What will my liberty lead to? What is this that I’m writing? As far as I know I never saw anybody write like this.” Such remarks frequently recur in the manuscript. The knowledge of the novelty of her invention is sometimes thrilling, sometimes frightening, and in one case is followed by a surprising interjection: “Who invented the chair? Someone with love for himself. So he invented greater comfort for the body. Then the centuries went by and nobody noticed a chair because using it was a merely automatic question. One needs courage to do a ‘brainstorm’: we never know what might come and frighten us. The sacred monster died. In its place was born a little girl who lost her mother.”

Of all Clarice Lispector’s works, *Água Viva* gives the strongest impression of having been spontaneously committed to paper. Yet perhaps none was as painstakingly composed. Even the apparently artless exclamation about her mother—who died when Clarice was nine, a victim of the pogroms in her native Ukraine—reappears in at least two other books, as well as in an essay she later published about Brasília. As she writes in *Loud Object*, “Art is not purity: it is purification. Art is not liberty: it is liberation.”

Clarice had serious doubts about the work. “She was insecure and asked a few people for their opinion,” her friend and editor Olga Borelli recalled. “With other books Clarice didn’t show that insecurity. With *Água Viva* she did. That was the only time I saw Clarice hesitate before handing in a book to the publisher. She herself said that.”

“I don’t know why you liked my book *Loud Object*,” Clarice wrote the poet Marly de Oliveira. “Since once the first impulse had passed, I reread it and was horrified. It’s so bad, so bad, that I’m not going to publish it, I already pulled it from the publishers.” Olga’s delicate interventions may have saved the book, and with it the new kind of writing Clarice was pioneering.

Clarice’s writing had always pushed the limits of her language. In 1954, in her longest known statement on the subject of translating her work, she wrote her French publisher a series of letters that reportedly “damaged the health” of her editor.

“I admit, if you like, that the sentences do not reflect the usual manner of speaking, but I assure you that it is the same in Portuguese,” she writes. “The punctuation I employed in the book is not accidental and does not result from an ignorance of the rules of grammar. You will agree that the elementary principles of punctuation are taught in every school. I am fully aware of the reasons that led me to choose this punctuation and insist that it be respected.”

In editing these new translations of Clarice’s *Água Viva*, *The Passion According to G. H.*, *The Breath of Life*, and *Near to the Wild Heart*, I have kept her point very much in mind. Because no matter how odd Clarice Lispector’s prose sounds in translation, it sounds just as unusual in the original.

“The foreignness of her prose is one of the most overwhelming facts of our literary history, and even of the history of our language,” the poet Lêdo Ivo wrote.

The Canadian writer Claire Varin has regretted her translators’ tendency to “pluck the spines from the cactus.”

The tendency is understandable. It may even, to some extent, be inevitable. Clarice Lispector’s weird word choices, strange syntax, and lack of interest in conventional grammar produces sentences—often fragments of sentences—that veer toward abstraction without ever quite reaching it.

Her goal, mystical as well as artistic, was to rearrange conventional language to find meaning—never to discard it completely.

Paradoxically, the better one's Portuguese, the more difficult it is to read Clarice Lispector. The foreigner with a basic knowledge of Romance grammar and vocabulary can read her work with ease. The Brazilian, however, often finds her difficult. This is because her subtle rearrangements of everyday language are so surprising that they often baffle the reader, particularly the reader with little experience of her work.

In *Água Viva*, Clarice pushed her language as far as it could go without risking incoherence. The book was written in fragments, and Olga Borelli's editorial method, she wrote, was "breathing together, it's breathing together."

Because there is a logic in life, in events, as there is in a book. They follow one another, they must. Since if I took a fragment and wanted to move it further ahead, there wouldn't be anywhere to put it. It was like a puzzle. I took all the fragments and collected them, kept them in an envelope. On the back of a check, a piece of paper, a napkin . . . I still have some of those things at home, and some of them still even smell of her lipstick. She would wipe her lips and then stick it in her purse. . . . Suddenly she noted something down. After collecting all those fragments, I started to note, to number them. So it's not difficult to structure Clarice, or it's infinitely difficult, unless you commune with her and already are in the habit of reading her.

As ultimately published in August 1973, the book was called *Água Viva*. This is the only one of Clarice's titles that offers no ready translation. Literally "living water," the words can mean a spring or a fountain, a meaning often suggested inside the book, but to a Brazilian the words will first of all refer to a jellyfish.

This was not the meaning Clarice intended—"I preferred *Água Viva*, a thing that bubbles. At the source"—but for a work without plot or story, the hint of invertebrate floating is especially apt. Perhaps this is what Olga Borelli had in mind when she compared this book to those that had come before it: "*The Passion According to G. H.* has a backbone, doesn't it?"

Água Viva does not, and this initially made Clarice uneasy: "That book, I spent three years without daring to publish it, thinking it would be awful.

Because it didn't have a story, it didn't have a plot." The question of what exactly she was writing preoccupied Clarice, and with good reason. "This is not a book because this is not how one writes," she announces at the beginning. It does not, in fact, resemble anything written at the time, in Brazil or anywhere else. Its closest cousins are visual or musical, a resemblance Clarice emphasizes by turning the narrator, a writer in the earlier versions, into a painter; she herself was dabbling in painting at the time. The epigraph comes from the Belgian artist Michel Seuphor: "There must be a painting totally free of dependence on the figure—or object—which, like music, illustrates nothing, tells no story, and launches no myth. Such painting would simply evoke the incommunicable kingdoms of the spirit, where dream becomes thought, where line becomes existence."

The title *Beyond Thought* referred to these "incommunicable kingdoms of the spirit," the unconscious realm she had meant to simulate, and provoke. "Could it be that what I am writing you is beyond thought? Reason is what it isn't. Whoever can stop reasoning—which is terribly difficult—let them come along with me."

As Borelli understood, this "spineless" writing is not random, or even abstract. Instead, its consistency more properly belongs to the realm of dreams, in which ideas and images connect with a logic that may not be immediately apparent but is nonetheless real. This was the writing Clarice described when she wrote in *The Foreign Legion*, "In painting as in music and literature, what is called abstract so often seems to me the figurative of a more delicate and more difficult reality, less visible to the naked eye."

In *Água Viva* she would discover a means of writing about herself and that "delicate and more difficult reality" in a way that transformed her individual experience into a universal poetry. In a body of work as emotionally powerful, formally innovative, and philosophically radical as Clarice Lispector's, *Água Viva* stands out as a particularly magnificent triumph. The reviews reflect the same amazement Clarice had provoked thirty years before, when she published *Near to the Wild Heart*. "With this fiction," wrote a critic who had attacked *An Apprenticeship*, "Clarice Lispector awakens the literature currently being produced in Brazil from a depressing and degrading lethargy and elevates it to a level of universal

perennity and perfection.” The book has inspired passions among Brazil’s greatest artists. The famous singer Cazuza, for example, read it one hundred and eleven times.

BENJAMIN MOSER
UTRECHT, MARCH 2012

Água Viva

There must be a kind of painting totally free of the dependence on the figure—or object—which, like music, illustrates nothing, tells no story, and launches no myth. Such painting would simply evoke the incommunicable kingdoms of the spirit, where dream becomes thought, where line becomes existence.

— Michel Seuphor

IT'S WITH SUCH PROFOUND HAPPINESS. SUCH A HALLELUJAH. HALLELUJAH, I shout, hallelujah merging with the darkest human howl of the pain of separation but a shout of diabolic joy. Because no one can hold me back now. I can still reason—I studied mathematics, which is the madness of reason—but now I want the plasma—I want to eat straight from the placenta. I am a little scared: scared of surrendering completely because the next instant is the unknown. The next instant, do I make it? or does it make itself? We make it together with our breath. And with the flair of the bullfighter in the ring.

Let me tell you: I'm trying to seize the fourth dimension of this instant—now so fleeting that it's already gone because it's already become a new instant—now that's also already gone. Every thing has an instant in which it is. I want to grab hold of the *is* of the thing. These instants passing through the air I breathe: in fireworks they explode silently in space. I want to possess the atoms of time. And to capture the present, forbidden by its very nature: the present slips away and the instant too, I am this very second forever in the now. Only the act of love—the limpid star-like abstraction of feeling—captures the unknown moment, the instant hard as crystal and vibrating in the air and life is this untellable instant, larger than the event itself: during love the impersonal jewel of the moment shines in the air, the strange glory of the body, matter made feeling in the trembling of the instants—and the feeling is both immaterial and so objective that it seems to happen outside your body, sparkling on high, joy, joy is time's material and the essence of the instant. And in the instant is the *is* of the instant. I want to seize my *is*. And like a bird I sing hallelujah into the air. And my song belongs to no one. But no passion suffered in pain and love is not followed by a hallelujah.

Is my theme the instant? the theme of my life. I try to keep up with it, I divide thousands of times into as many times as the number of instants running by, fragmented as I am and the moments so fragile—my only vow is to life born with time and growing along with it: only in time itself is there room enough for me.

All of me is writing to you and I feel the taste of being and the taste-of-you is as abstract as the instant. I also use my whole body when I paint and set the bodiless upon the canvas, my whole body wrestling with myself. You don't understand music: you hear it. So hear me with your whole body. When you come to read me you will ask why I don't keep to painting and my exhibitions, since I write so rough and disorderly. It's because now I feel the need for words—and what I'm writing is new to me because until now my true word has never been touched. The word is my fourth dimension.

Today I finished the canvas I told you about: curves that intersect in fine black lines, and you, with your habit of wanting to know why— I'm not interested in that, the cause is past matter—will ask me why the fine black lines? because of the same secret that now makes me write as if to you, writing something round and rolled up and warm, but sometimes cold as the fresh instants, the water of an ever-trembling stream. Can what I painted on this canvas be put into words? Just as the silent word can be suggested by a musical sound.

I see that I've never told you how I listen to music—I gently rest my hand on the record player and my hand vibrates, sending waves through my whole body: and so I listen to the electricity of the vibrations, the last substratum of reality's realm, and the world trembles inside my hands.

And so I realize that I want the vibrating substratum of the repeated word sung in Gregorian chant. I'm aware that I can't say everything I know, I only know when painting or pronouncing, syllables blind of meaning. And if here I must use words, they must bear an almost merely bodily meaning. I'm struggling with the last vibration. To tell you of my substratum I make a

sentence of words made only from instants-now. Read, therefore, my invention as pure vibration with no meaning beyond each whistling syllable, read this: “with the passing of the centuries I lost the secret of Egypt, when I moved in longitudes, latitudes, and altitudes with the energetic action of electrons, protons, and neutrons, under the spell of the word and its shadow.” What I wrote you here is an electronic drawing without past or future: it is simply now.

I must also write to you because you harvest discursive words and not the directness of my painting. I know that my phrases are crude, I write them with too much love, and that love makes up for their faults, but too much love is bad for the work. This isn’t a book because this isn’t how anyone writes. Is what I write a single climax? My days are a single climax: I live on the edge.

In writing I can’t manufacture something as in painting, when I use my craft to mix a color. But I’m trying to write to you with my whole body, loosing an arrow that will sink into the tender and neuralgic centre of the word. My secret body tells you: dinosaurs, ichthyosaurs, and plesiosaurs, meaning nothing but their sound, though this doesn’t dry them out like straw but moistens them instead. I don’t paint ideas, I paint the unattainable “forever.” Or “for never,” it amounts to the same. More than anything else, I paint painting. And more than anything else, I write you hard writing. I want to grab the word in my hand. Is the word an object? And from the instants I extract the juice of their fruits. I must deprive myself to reach the core and seed of life. The instant is living seed.

The secret harmony of disharmony: I don’t want something already made but something still being tortuously made. My unbalanced words are the wealth of my silence. I write in acrobatics and pirouettes in the air—I write because I so deeply want to speak. Though writing only gives me the full measure of silence.

And if I say “I” it’s because I dare not say “you,” or “we” or “one.” I’m forced to the humility of personalizing myself belittling myself but I am the

are-you.

Yes, I want the last word which is also so primary that it gets tangled up with the unattainable part of the real. I'm still afraid to move away from logic because I fall into instinct and directness, and into the future: the invention of today is the only way to usher in the future. Then it's the future, and any hour is your allotted hour. So what's the harm of moving away from logic? I deal in raw materials. I'm after whatever is lurking beyond thought. No use trying to pin me down: I simply slip away and won't allow it, no label will stick. I'm entering a very new and genuine chapter, curious about itself, so appealing and personal that I can't paint it or write it. It's like moments I had with you, when I would love you, moments I couldn't go past because I descended into their depths. It's a state of touching the surrounding energy and I shudder. Some mad, mad harmony. I know that my gaze must be that of a primitive person surrendered completely to the world, primitive like the gods who only allow the broad strokes of good and evil and don't want to know about good tangled up like hair in evil, evil that is good.

I pin down sudden instants that carry within them their own death and others are born—I pin down the instants of metamorphosis and there's a terrible beauty to their sequence and concurrence.

Now day is breaking, a dawn of white mist on the sands of the beach. Everything is mine, then. I barely touch food, I don't want to awaken beyond the day's awakening. I'm growing with the day that as it grows kills in me a certain vague hope and forces me to look the hard sun straight in the face. The gale blows and scatters my papers. I hear that wind of cries, the death rattle of a bird open in oblique flight. And I here impose upon myself the severity of a taut language, I impose upon myself the nakedness of a white skeleton free of humours. But the skeleton is free of life and while I live I shudder all over. I won't reach the final nakedness. And I still don't want it, apparently.

This is life seen by life. I may not have meaning but it is the same lack of meaning that the pulsing vein has.

I want to write to you like someone learning. I photograph each instant. I deepen the words as if I were painting, more than an object, its shadow. I don't want to ask why, you can always ask why and always get no answer—could I manage to surrender to the expectant silence that follows a question without an answer? Though I sense that some place or time the great answer for me does exist.

And then I shall know how to paint and write, after the strange but intimate answer. Listen to me, listen to the silence. What I say to you is never what I say to you but something else instead. It captures the thing that escapes me and yet I live from it and am above a shining darkness. One instant leads me numbly to the next and the athematic theme unfurls without a plan but geometric like the successive shapes in a kaleidoscope.

I slowly enter my gift to myself, splendor ripped open by the final song that seems to be the first. I enter the writing slowly as I once entered painting. It is a world tangled up in creepers, syllables, woodbine, colors and words—threshold of an ancestral cavern that is the womb of the world and from it I shall be born.

And if I often paint caves that is because they are my plunge into the earth, dark but haloed with brightness, and I, blood of nature—extravagant and dangerous caves, talisman of the Earth, where stalactites, fossils and rocks come together, and where the animals mad by their own malign nature seek refuge. The caves are my hell. Forever dreaming cave with its fogs, memory or longing? eerie, eerie, esoteric, greenish with the slime of time. Inside the dark cave glimmer the hanging rats with the cruciform wings of bats. I see downy and black spiders. Mice and rats run frightened along the ground and up the walls. Between the rocks the scorpion. Crabs, just like themselves since prehistory, through deaths and births, would look like threatening beasts if they were the size of a man. Old cockroaches crawl in the murky light. And all of this is me. All is weighted with sleep when I

paint a cave or write to you about it—from outside it comes the clatter of dozens of wild horses stamping with dry hoofs the darkness, and from the friction of the hoofs the rejoicing is freed in sparks: here I am, I and the cave, in the very time that will rot us.

I want to put into words but without description the existence of the cave that some time ago I painted—and I don't know how. Only by repeating its sweet horror, cavern of terror and wonders, place of afflicted souls, winter and hell, unpredictable substratum of the evil that is inside an earth that is not fertile. I call the cave by its name and it begins to live with its miasma. I then fear myself who knows how to paint the horror, I, creature of echoing caverns that I am, and I suffocate because I am word and also its echo.

But the instant-now is a firefly that sparks and goes out, sparks and goes out. The present is the instant in which the wheel of the speeding car just barely touches the ground. And the part of the wheel that still hasn't touched, will touch in that immediacy that absorbs the present instant and turns it into the past. I, alive and glimmering like the instants, spark and go out, alight and go out, spark and go out. It's just that whatever I capture in me has, when it's now being transposed into writing, the despair that words take up more instants than the flash of a glance. More than the instant, I want its flow.

A new era, this my own, and it announces me right away. Am I brave enough? For now I am: because I come from the suffering afar, I come from the hell of love but now I am free of you. I come from afar—from a weighty ancestry. I who come from the pain of living. And I no longer want it. I want the vibration of happiness. I want the impartiality of Mozart. But I also want inconsistency. Freedom? it's my final refuge, I forced myself to freedom and I bear it not like a talent but with heroism: I'm heroically free. And I want the flow.

What I write to you is not comfortable. I don't impart confidences. Instead I metallize myself. And I'm not comfortable for you and for me; my word bursts into the space of the day. What you will know of me is the shadow of

the arrow that has hit its target. I shall only vainly grasp a shadow that takes up no room in space, and what barely matters is the dart. I construct something free of me and of you—this is my freedom that leads to death.

In this instant-now I'm enveloped by a wandering diffuse desire for marvelling and millions of reflections of the sun in the water that runs from the faucet onto the lawn of a garden all ripe with perfumes, garden and shadows that I invent right here and now and that are the concrete means of speaking in this my instant of life. My state is that of a garden with running water. In describing it I try to mix words that time can make itself. What I tell you should be read quickly like when you look.

Now it's day and suddenly again Sunday in an unexpected eruption. Sunday is a day of echoes—hot, dry, and everywhere buzzings of bees and wasps, cries of birds and the distance of paced hammer blows—where do the echoes of Sunday come from? I who loathe Sunday because it's hollow. I, who want the most primary thing because it's the source of generation—I who long to drink water at the source of the spring—I who am all of this, must by fate and tragic destiny only know and taste the echoes of me, because I cannot capture the me itself. I am in a stupefying, trembling, marvel expectation, my back turned to the world, and somewhere the innocent squirrel escapes. Plants, plants. I snooze in the summer heat of the Sunday that has flies circling the sugar-bowl. A boast of colors, that of Sunday, and ripe splendor. And all this I painted some time ago and on another Sunday. And here is that once-virgin canvas, now covered by ripe colors. Bluebottle flies glitter in front of my window open to the air of the torpid street. The day seems like the smooth stretched skin of a fruit that in a small catastrophe the teeth tear, its liquor drains. I'm afraid of the accursed Sunday that liquidifies me.

To remake myself and remake you I return to my state of garden and shadow, cool reality, I barely exist and if I exist it's with delicate caution. Around the shadow is a heat of abundant sweat. I'm alive. But I feel that I have yet to reach my limits, borders with what? without borders, the adventure of dangerous freedom. But I take risks, I live taking risks. I'm

full of acacias swaying yellow, and I who have barely started my journey, I start it with a sense of tragedy, guessing toward which lost ocean my steps of life are leading. And madly I take control of the recesses of myself, my ravings suffocate me with so much beauty. I am before, I am almost, I am never. And all of this I won when I stopped loving you.

I write to you as an exercise in sketching before painting. I see words. What I say is pure present and this book is a straight line in space. It's always current, and a camera's photometer opens and immediately closes, but keeping within it the flash. Even if I say "I lived" or "I shall live" it's present because I'm saying them now.

I also started these pages with the goal of preparing myself for painting. But now I'm overwhelmed by the taste of words, and almost free myself from the dominion of paint; I feel a voluptuousness in going along creating something to tell you. I'm living the initiation ceremony of the word and my gestures are hieratic and triangular.

Yes, this is life seen by life. But suddenly I forget how to capture whatever is happening, I don't know how to capture whatever exists except by living here each thing that arises and no matter what it is: I am almost free of my errors. I let the free horse run fiery. I, who trot nervously and only reality delimits me.

And when the day reaches its end I hear the crickets and become entirely replete and unintelligible. Then I live the blue daybreak that comes with its bulge full of little birds—I wonder if I'm giving you an idea of what a person goes through in life? And every thing that occurs to me I note to pin it down. For I want to feel in my hands the quivering and lively nerve of the now and may that nerve resist me like a restless vein. And may it rebel, that nerve of life, and may it contort and throb. And may sapphires, amethysts and emeralds spill into the dark eroticism of abundant life: because in my darkness quakes at last the great topaz, word that has its own light.

I am now listening to a sylvan music, almost just drumming and rhythm that comes from a neighboring house where young junkies live the present. Another instant of incessant, incessant rhythm, and something terrible happens to me.

It's that I shall pass because of the rhythm into its paroxysm—I shall pass to the other side of life. How can I tell you this? It's terrible and threatens me. I feel that I can no longer stop and I'm scared. I try to distract myself from the fear. But the real hammering stopped long ago: I'm being the incessant hammering in me. From which I must free myself. But I can't: the other side of me calls me. The footsteps I hear are my own.

As if ripping from the depths of the earth the knotted roots of a rare tree, that's how I write to you, and those roots as if they were powerful tentacles like voluminous naked bodies of strong women entwined by serpents and by carnal desires for fulfilment, and all this is the prayer of a black mass, and a creeping plea for amen: because the bad is unprotected and needs the approval of God: that is creation.

Could I have gone without feeling it to the other side? The other side is a throbbingly hellish life. But there is the transfiguration of my terror: so I give myself over to a heavy life all in symbols heavy as ripe fruits. I choose mistaken resemblances but that drag me through the tangle. A trace memory of the common sense of my past keeps me brushing against this side here. Help me because something is coming toward me and laughing at me. Quick, save me.

But no one can give me their hand to help me out: I must use great strength—and in the nightmare, with a sudden wrench, I finally fall face-down on this side here. I let myself lie tossed upon the rustic earth, exhausted, heart still beating madly, breathing in great retchings. Am I safe? I wipe my damp brow. I get up slowly, try to take the first steps of a weak convalescence. I'm managing to get my balance.

No, all this isn't happening in real facts but in the domain of—of an art? yes, of an artifice through which a most delicate reality arises which comes to exist in me: the transfiguration happened to me.

But the other side, from which I barely escaped, became sacred and I confide my secret to no one. It seems to me that in a dream I swore a pledge on the other side, a blood oath. No one will know anything: what I know is so volatile and nearly inexistent that it is between me and I.

Am I one of the weak? a weak woman possessed by incessant and mad rhythm? if I were solid and strong would I even have heard the rhythm? I find no answer: I am. This is all that comes to me from life. But what am I? the answer is just: what am I. Though I sometimes scream: I no longer want to be I! but I stick to myself and inextricably there forms a tessitura of life.

May whoever comes along with me come along: the journey is long, it is tough, but lived. Because now I am speaking to you seriously: I am not playing with words. I incarnate myself in the voluptuous and unintelligible phrases that tangle up beyond the words. And a silence rises subtly from the knock of the phrases.

So writing is the method of using the word as bait: the word fishing for whatever is not word. When this non-word—between the lines— takes the bait, something has been written. Once whatever is between the lines is caught, the word can be tossed away in relief. But that's where the analogy ends: the non-word, taking the bait, incorporates it. So what saves you is writing absentmindedly.

I don't want to have the terrible limitation of those who live merely from what can make sense. Not I: I want an invented truth.

What shall I tell you? I shall tell you the instants. I go too far and only then do I exist and in a feverish way. What a fever—will I one day manage to stop living? woe is me, who dies so much. I follow the tortuous path of

roots bursting the earth, I have a gift for passion, in the bonfire of a dry trunk I contort in the blaze. To the span of my existence I give an occult meaning that goes beyond me. I'm a concomitant being: I gather in me time past, the present and the future, the time that pulses in the tick-tock of the clocks.

To interpret myself and formulate me I need new signs and new articulations in shapes found on this side and beyond my human story. I transfigure reality and then another dreaming and sleepwalking reality, creates me. And all of me rolls and as I roll on the ground I add to myself in leaves, I, anonymous work of an anonymous reality only justifiable as long as my life lasts. And then? then all that I lived will be a poor superfluity.

But for the time being I am in the centre of everything that screams and teems. And it's subtle as the most intangible reality. For now time is the duration of a thought.

This contact with the invisible nucleus of reality is of such purity.

I know what I am doing here: I am telling of the instants that drip and are thick with blood.

I know what I am doing here: I'm improvising. But what's wrong with that? improvising as in jazz they improvise music, jazz in fury, improvising in front of the crowd.

It's so odd to have exchanged my paints for this strange thing that is the word. Words—I move cautiously among them as they can turn threatening; I can have the freedom to write this: "pilgrims, merchants and shepherds led their caravans toward Tibet and the roads were difficult and primitive." With that phrase I made a scene be born, as in a photographic flash.

What does this jazz that is improvisation say? it says arms tangled with legs and the flames rising and I passive like meat that is devoured by the sharp

hook of an eagle that interrupts its blind flight. I express to me and to you my most hidden desires and achieve an orgiastic confused beauty. I tremble with pleasure amidst the novelty of using words that form an intense thicket. I struggle to conquer more deeply my freedom of sensations and thoughts, without any utilitarian meaning: I am alone, I and my freedom. Such is my freedom that it could scandalize a primitive but I know that you are not scandalized by the fullness I achieve and that is without perceptible borders. This capacity of mine to live whatever is rounded and ample—I surround myself with carnivorous plants and legendary animals, all bathed in the coarse and twisted oblique light of a mythical sex. I proceed in an intuitive way and without seeking an idea: I am organic. And I don't question myself about my motives. I plunge into the almost pain of an intense happiness—and to adorn me leaves and branches spring up in my hair.

I don't know what I'm writing about: I am obscure to myself. I only had initially a lunar and lucid vision, and so I plucked for myself the instant before it died and perpetually dies. This is not a message of ideas that I am transmitting to you but an instinctive ecstasy of whatever is hidden in nature and that I foretell. And this is a feast of words. I write in signs that are more a gesture than voice. All this is what I got used to painting, delving into the intimate nature of things. But now the time to stop painting has come in order to remake myself, I remake myself in these lines. I have a voice. As I throw myself into the line of my drawing, this is an exercise in life without planning. The world has no visible order and all I have is the order of my breath. I let myself happen.

I am inside the great dreams of the night: for the right-now is by night. And I sing the passage of time: I am still the queen of the Medes and of the Persians and am also my slow evolution that throws itself like a drawbridge into a future whose milky fogs I already breathe today. My aura is mystery of life. I surpass myself abdicating myself and am therefore the world: I follow the voice of the world, I myself suddenly with a unique voice.

The world: a tangle of bristling telephone wires. And the brightness however is still dark: that is I facing the world.

A dangerous balance, mine, mortal danger for the soul. The night of today looks at me with torpor, verdigris and lime. I want inside this night that is longer than life, I want, inside this night, life raw and bloody and full of saliva. I want this word: splendiddness, splendiddness is the fruit in its succulence, fruit without sadness. I want distances. My wild intuition about myself. But my main thing is always hidden. I am implicit. And when I make myself explicit I lose the humid intimacy.

What color is the spatial infinity? it is the color of air.

We—faced with the scandal of death.

Listen only superficially to what I say and from the lack of meaning a meaning will be born as from me a high and light life is inexplicably born. The dense jungle of words thickly envelops what I feel and live, and transforms everything I am into some thing of mine that remains outside me. Nature is enveloping: it entangles me entirely and is sexually alive, just that: alive. I too am ferociously alive—and I lick my snout like a tiger who has just devoured a deer.

I write to you now, at the very moment itself. I unfold only in the now. I speak today—not yesterday or tomorrow—but today and at this actual perishable instant. My small and boxed-in freedom joins me to the freedom of the world—but what is a window if not the air framed by right angles? I am rudely alive. I am leaving—says death without adding that he's taking me along. And I shiver in panting breath because I must go with him. I am death. Death takes place in my very being—how can I explain to you? It's a sensual death. Like a dead person I walk through the high grass in the greenish light of its blades: I am Diana the Huntress of gold and all I can find are heaps of bones. I live from an underlying layer of feelings: I am barely alive.

But these high summer days of damnation whisper to me the need for renunciation. I renounce having a meaning, and then the sweet and painful weakness grips me. Round and round shapes cross in the air. It's a summer heat. I navigate in my galley that braves the winds of a bewitched summer. Crushed leaves remind me of the ground of my childhood. The green hand and the golden breasts—that is how I paint the mark of Satan. They who fear us and our alchemy stripped witches and sorcerers in search of the hidden mark that was almost always found though it could only be known on sight for that mark was indescribable and unpronounceable even in the darkness of the Middle Ages— Middle Ages, thou art my dark subagency and in the glare of the bonfires the marked ones dance in circles riding branches and foliage which are the phallic symbol of fertility: even in the white mass blood is used and there it is drunk.

Listen: I let you be, therefore let me be.

But eternally is a very hard word: it has a granitic “t” in the middle. Eternity: for everything that is never began. My small ever so limited head bursts when thinking about something that doesn't begin and doesn't end—for that is the eternal. Fortunately that feeling doesn't last long because I can't bear it to stay and if it did it would lead to madness. But my head also bursts when imagining the opposite: something that has begun—because where would it begin? And that has ended—but what comes after ending? As you see, it's impossible for me to deepen and take possession of life, which is aerial, is my light breath. But I do know what I want here: I want the inconclusive. I want the profound organic disorder that nevertheless hints at an underlying order. The great potency of potentiality. These babbled phrases of mine are made the very moment they're being written and are so new and green they crackle. They are the now. I want the experience of a lack of construction. Though this text of mine is crossed from end to end by a fragile connecting thread—which? that of a plunge into the matter of the word? of passion? A lustful thread, breath that heats the passing of syllables. Life really just barely escapes me though the certainty comes to me that life is other and has a hidden style.

This text that I give you is not to be seen close up: it gains its secret previously invisible roundness when seen from a high-flying plane. Then you can divine the play of islands and see the channels and seas. Understand me: I write you an onomatopoeia, convulsion of language. I'm not transmitting to you a story but just words that live from sound. I speak to you thus:

“Lustful trunk.”

And I bathe within it. It is linked to the root that penetrates inside us into the earth. All that I write you is taut. I use stray words that are in themselves a free dart: savages, barbarians, decadent noblemen and gangsters. Does that mean anything to you? It speaks to me.

But the most important word in the language has but two letters: is. Is.

I am at its core.

I still am.

I am at the living and soft centre.

Still.

It sparkles and is elastic. Like the gait of a glossy black panther that I saw and that walked softly, slowly and dangerously. But not caged—because I don't want that. As for the unforeseeable—the next phrase is unforeseeable to me. In the core where I am, in the core of the Is, I ask no questions. Because when it is—it is. I am only limited by my identity. I, elastic being and separated from other bodies.

In truth I'm still not quite seeing properly the thread of what I'm writing you. I think I never shall—but I acknowledge the dark in which the two

eyes of the soft panther shine. Darkness is my hothouse. Enchanted darkness. I'll keep talking to you and taking the risk of disconnection: I am subterraneously unreachable by my knowledge.

I write to you because I don't understand myself.

But I'll keep following myself. Elastic. This forest where I survive in order to be is such a mystery. But now I think things are happening. That is: I'm going in. I mean: into the mystery. I myself mysterious and inside the core in which I move swimming, protozoan. One day I childishly said: I can do everything. It was the pre-viewing of one day being able to cast myself off and fall into the abandon of every law. Elastic. The profound joy: the secret ecstasy. I know how to invent a thought. I feel the commotion of novelty. But I am well aware that what I write is only a tone.

In my core I have the strange impression that I don't belong to the human species.

There is much to say that I don't know how to say. The words are lacking. But I refuse to invent new ones: those that already exist must say what can be said and what is forbidden. And I can sense whatever is forbidden. If I have the strength. Beyond thought there are no words: it is itself. My painting has no words: it is beyond thought. In this land of the is-itself I am pure crystalline ecstasy. It is itself. I am myself. You are yourself.

And I am haunted by my ghosts, by all that is mythic, fantastic and gigantic: life is supernatural. I walk holding an open umbrella upon a tightrope. I walk to the limit of my great dream. I see the fury of the visceral impulses: tortured viscera guide me. I don't like what I just wrote — but I'm duty-bound to accept the whole section because it happened to me. And I have much respect for what I happen to myself. My essence is unconscious of itself and that's why I obey myself blindly.

I'm being antimelodic. I take pleasure in the difficult harmony of the harsh opposites. Where am I going? and the answer is: I'm going.

And so when I die, I'll never have been born and lived: death washes away the traces of the sea-foam on the beach.

Now it is an instant.

Here is another now.

And another. My effort: to bring now the future to here. I move inside my deep instincts which carry themselves out blindly. I feel then that I'm near springs, pools and waterfalls, all with abundant waters. And I free.

Hear me, hear my silence. What I say is never what I say but instead something else. When I say "abundant waters" I'm speaking of the force of body in the waters of the world. It captures that other thing that I'm really saying because I myself cannot. Read the energy that is in my silence. Ah I fear God and his silence.

I'm myself.

But there's also the mystery of the impersonal that is the "it": I have the impersonal inside me and isn't something the personal that sometimes floods me can corrupt or rot by the personal that sometimes floods me: but I dry myself in the sun and am an impersonal of the dry and germinative pit of a fruit. My personal is humus in the earth and lives from rotting. My "it" is hard like a pebble.

The transcendence inside me is the living and soft "it" and has the thought that an oyster has. Could the oyster when torn from its root feel anxiety? It is disturbed in its life without eyes. I used to drip lemon juice onto the living oyster and watched in horror and fascination as it contorted all over. And I was eating the living *it*. The living *it* is the God.

I'll stop for a bit because I know that the God is the world. He is whatever exists. I pray to whatever exists? It's not dangerous to approach whatever exists. Profound prayer is a meditation upon the nothing. It's the dry and electrical contact with oneself, an impersonal oneself.

I don't like when they drip lemon upon my depths and make me contort all over. Are the facts of life lemon on the oyster? Does the oyster sleep?

What is the first element? immediately there must have been two to have the secret intimate movement from which milk gushes.

I have been told that the cat after giving birth eats her own placenta and for four days eats nothing else. Only then does she drink milk. Let me speak strictly of breast-feeding. People talk about the milk rising. How? And it wouldn't help to explain because the explanation demands another explanation which would demand another explanation and which would open again onto the mystery. But I know *it* things about breast-feeding a child.

I am breathing. Up and down. Up and down. How does the naked oyster breathe? If it breathes I can't see it. Does what I cannot see not exist? What moves me the most is that what I cannot see nonetheless exists. For then I have at my feet a whole unknown world that exists entire and full of rich saliva. The truth is somewhere: but no use thinking. I shall not discover it and yet I live from it.

What I write to you does not come gently, slowly rising to a peak before dying away gently. No: what I write you is aflame like fiery eyes.

Tonight the moon is full. Through the window the moon covers my bed and turns everything a milky bluish white. The moon is gauche. It's to your left as you go in. So I escape by closing my eyes. Because the full moon is light insomnia: numb and drowsy like after love. And I had decided to go to sleep so I could dream, I was missing the news that comes in the dream.

So I dreamed something I'll try to reproduce. It was about a film I was watching. There was a man imitating a movie star. And everything this man did was in turn imitated by others and others. The slightest gesture. And there was the advert for a drink called Zerbino. The man took the bottle of Zerbino and lifted it to his lips. So everyone took a bottle of Zerbino and lifted it to their lips. In the centre the man who was imitating a movie star said: this is a film advertising Zerbino and Zerbino is actually rubbish. But that wasn't the end. The man picked up the drink again and drank. And so did the others: it was inevitable. Zerbino was an institution stronger than the man. The women at this point looked like stewardesses. Stewardesses are dehydrated—a lot of water needs to be added to their powder to turn them into milk. It's a film about automatic people who are acutely and gravely aware that they are automatic and that there's no escape. The God is not automatic: for Him every instant is. He is *it*.

But there are questions I asked myself as a child and that were never answered, they still echo mournfully: did the world make itself? But where did it make itself? in what place? And if it was by the energy of God—how did it begin? could it be like now when I am being and at the same time making myself? It's because of the absence of an answer that I get so bothered.

But 9 and 7 and 8 are my secret numbers. I am an initiate without a sect. Avid for the mystery. My passion for the crux of numbers, in which I divine the core of their own rigid and fatal destiny. And I dream of luxuriant grandeurs deepened in the darkness: whirl of abundance, where the velvety and carnivorous plants are we who have just sprouted, sharp love— slow faint.

Could it be that what I am writing to you is beyond thought? Reasoning is what it is not. Whoever can stop reasoning—which is terribly difficult—let them come along with me. But at least I'm not imitating a movie star and nobody needs to lift me to their lips or become a stewardess.

I've got a confession to make: I'm a little frightened. For I don't know where my freedom will lead me. It is neither arbitrary nor libertine. But I am unbound.

Every once in a while I'll give you a light story— melodic and cantabile area to break up this string quartet of mine: a figurative interval to open a clearing in my nourishing jungle.

Am I free? There is some thing still holding me. Or am I holding it? It's also this: I'm not entirely unbound because I am in union with everything. Moreover one person is everything. It's not heavy to carry because it simply isn't carried: it is everything.

It seems to me that for the first time I'm knowing about things. My impression is that I only don't go more toward things to not surpass myself. I have a certain fear of myself, I'm not to be trusted and mistrust my false power.

This is the word of someone who cannot.

I direct nothing. Not even my own words. But it's not sad: it's happy humility. I, who live sideways, am to your left as you come in. And the world trembles within me.

Is this word to you promiscuous? I would like it not to be, I am not promiscuous. But I am kaleidoscopic: I'm fascinated by my sparkling mutations that I here kaleidoscopically record.

Now I am going to stop for a while to deepen myself more. Then I'll be back.

I'm back. I was existing. I received a letter from São Paulo from a person I don't know. A final suicide note. I called São Paulo. No one answered, it

rang and rang and echoed as if in a silent apartment. Did he die or not die. This morning I called again: still no answer. He died, yes. I'll never forget.

I'm no longer frightened. Let me talk, all right? I was born like this: drawing from my mother's uterus the life that was always eternal. Wait for me—all right? When I paint or write I'm anonymous. My profound anonymity which no one ever touched.

I have an important thing to tell you. Because I'm not joking: *it* is the pure element. Material of the instant of time. I am not objectivizing anything: I am having the real birth of *it*. I feel faint like someone about to be born.

To be born: I've watched a cat give birth. The kitten emerges wrapped in a sack of fluid and all huddled inside. The mother licks the sack of fluid so many times that it finally breaks and there a kitten almost free, only attached by its umbilical cord. Then the mother-creator-cat breaks that cord with her teeth and another fact appears in the world. That process is *it*. I am not joking. I am earnest. Because I am free. I am so simple.

I am giving freedom to you. First I rip the sack of fluid. Then I cut the umbilical cord. And you are alive on your own account.

And when I am born, I become free. That is the foundation of my tragedy.

No. It's not easy. But it "is." I ate my own placenta so as not to have to eat for four days. To have milk to give you. Milk is a "this." And no one is I. No one is you. That is what solitude is.

I'm waiting for the next phrase. It's a matter of seconds. Speaking of seconds I ask if you can stand for time to be today and now and right away. I can stand it because I ate my own placenta.

At half past three in the morning I woke up. And immediately elastic I jumped out of bed. I came to write you. I mean: be. Now it's half past five. I

want nothing: I am pure. I don't wish this solitude on you. But I myself am in the creating fog. Lucid darkness, luminous stupidity.

There is much I cannot tell you. I am not going to be autobiographical. I want to be "bio."

I write with the flow of the words.

Before the appearance of the mirror, the person didn't know his own face except reflected in the waters of a lake. After a certain point everyone is responsible for the face he has. I'll now look at mine. It is a naked face. And when I think that no other like it exists in the world, I get a happy shock. Nor will there ever be. Never is the impossible. I like never. I also like ever. What is there between never and ever that links them so indirectly and intimately?

At the bottom of everything there is the hallelujah.

This instant is. You who read me are.

I find it hard to believe that I shall die. Because I'm bubbling in cold freshness. My life will be very long because each instant is. I get the feeling I'm about to be born and can't.

I am a heart beating in the world.

You who are reading me please help me to be born.

Wait: it's getting dark. Darker.

And darker.

The instant is of total darkness.

It goes on.

Wait: I begin to glimpse a thing. A luminescent shape. A milky belly with a navel? Wait—because I shall emerge from this darkness where I am afraid, darkness and ecstasy. I am the heart of the shadow.

The problem is that the curtain over the window of my room is defective. It is stuck and so it doesn't close. So the whole full moon enters and phosphoresces the room with silences: it's horrible.

Now the shadows are retreating.

I was born.

Pause.

Marvelous scandal: I am born.

My eyes are shut. I am pure unconsciousness. They already cut the umbilical cord: I am unattached in the universe. I don't think but feel the *it*. With my eyes I blindly seek the breast: I want thick milk. No one taught me to want. But I already want. I'm lying with my eyes open looking at the ceiling. Inside is the darkness. An I that pulses already forms. There are sunflowers. There is tall wheat. I is.

I hear the hollow boom of time. It's the world deafly forming. If I can hear that is because I exist before the formation of time. "I am" is the world. World without time. My consciousness now is light and it is air. Air has neither place nor time. Air is the non-place where everything will exist. What I am writing is the music of the air. The formation of the world. Slowly what will be approaches. What will be already is. The future is ahead and behind and to either side. The future is what always existed and always will exist. Even if Time is abolished? What I'm writing to you is not for reading— it's for being. The trumpets of the angel-beings echo in the

without time. The first flower is born in the air. The ground that is earth forms. The rest is air and the rest is slow fire in perpetual mutation. Does the word “perpetual” not exist because time does not exist? But the boom exists. And this existence of mine starts to exist. Is that time starting?

It suddenly occurred to me that you don’t need order to live. There is no pattern to follow and the pattern itself doesn’t even exist: I am born.

I’m still not ready to talk about “he” or “she.” I demonstrate “that.” That is universal law. Birth and death. Birth. Death. Birth and—like a breathing of the world.

I am pure *it* that was pulsing rhythmically. But I can feel that soon I shall be ready to talk about he or she. I’m not promising you a story here. But there’s *it*. Bearable? *It* is soft and is oyster and is placenta. I am not joking because I am not a synonym—I am the name itself. There is a thread of steel going through all that I am writing you. There’s the future. Which is today.

My vast night goes by in the primary of a latency. The hand touches the earth and listens hotly to a heart pulsing. I see the great white slug with a woman’s breasts: is that a human entity? I burn it in an inquisitorial bonfire. I have the mysticism of the darkness of a remote past. And I emerge from these victims’ tortures with the indescribable mark that symbolizes life. Elemental creatures, dwarves, gnomes, goblins and sprites surround me. I sacrifice animals to collect the blood I need for my witching ceremonies. In my fury I offer up my soul in its own blackness. The mass frightens me—me who carries it out. And the clouded mind dominates matter. The beast bares its teeth and in the distance of the air gallop the horses of the carnival floats.

In my night I idolise the secret meaning of the world. Mouth and tongue. And a horse free with loosed strength. I keep its hoof in amorous fetishism. In my deep night a mad wind blows that brings me scraps of screams.

I am feeling the martyrdom of an untimely sensuality. In the early hours I awake full of fruit. Who will come to gather the fruit of my life? If not you and I myself? Why is it that things an instant before they happen already seem to have happened? It's because of the simultaneity of time. And so I ask you questions and these will be many. Because I am a question.

And in my night I feel the evil that rules me. What is called a beautiful landscape causes me nothing but fatigue. What I like are landscapes of dry and baked earth, with contorted trees and mountains made of rock and with a whitish and suspended light. There, yes, a hidden beauty lies. I know that you don't like art either. I was born hard, heroic, alone, and standing. And I found my counterpoint in the landscape without picturesqueness and without beauty. Ugliness is my banner of war. I love the ugly with the love of equals. And I defy death. I—I am my own death. And no one goes further. The barbarian within me seeks the cruel barbarian outside me. I see in light and dark I the faces of people flickering in the flames of the bonfire. I am a tree that burns with hard pleasure. A single sweetness possesses me: complicity with the world. I love my cross, which I painfully carry. It's the least I can make of my life: accept commiserably the sacrifice of the night.

The strangeness takes me: so I open the black umbrella and throw myself into a feast of dancing where stars sparkle. The furious nerve inside me and that contorts. Until the early hours come and find me bloodless. The early hours are great and eat me. The gale calls me. I follow it and tear myself to pieces. If I don't enter the game that unfolds in life I shall lose my own life in a suicide of my species. I protect with fire the game of my life. When the existence of me and of the world can no longer be borne by reason— then I loose myself and follow a latent truth. Would I recognise the truth if it were proven?

I am making myself. I make myself until I reach the pit.

About me in the world I want to tell you about the strength that guides me and brings me the world itself, about the vital sensuality of clear structures, and about the curves that are organically connected to other curved shapes.

My handwriting and my circumvolutions are potent and the freedom that blows in summer has fatality in itself. The eroticism that belongs to whatever is living is scattered in the air, in the sea, in the plants, in us, scattered in the vehemence of my voice, I write you with my voice. And there is a vigor of the robust trunk, of roots buried in the living earth that reacts giving great sustenance. I breathe the energy by night. And all this in the realm of the fantastic. Fantastic: the world for an instant is exactly what my heart asks. I am about to die and construct new compositions. I'm expressing myself very badly and the right words escape me. My internal form has been carefully purified and yet my bond with the world has the naked crudity of free dreams and of great realities. I do not know prohibition. And my own strength frees me, that full life that overflows me. And I plan nothing in my intuitive work of living: I work with the indirect, the informal and the unforeseen.

Now in the early hours I am pale and gasping for breath and have a dry mouth dry in the face of what I achieve. Nature in choral canticle and I dying. What does nature sing? the last word itself that is never again I. The centuries will fall upon me. But for now a fierceness of body and soul that shows itself in the rich scalding of heavy words that trample one another—and something wild, primary and enervated rises from my swamps, the accursed plant that is about to surrender to God. The more accursed, the nearer toward the God. I deepened myself in myself and found that I want bloody life, and the occult meaning has an intensity that has light. It is the secret light of a knowledge of fatality: the cornerstone of the earth. It is more an omen of life than actual life. I exorcise it excluding the profane. In my world little freedom of action is granted me. I am free only to carry out the fatal gestures. My anarchy obeys subterraneously a law in which I deal occultly with astronomy, mathematics and mechanics. The liturgy of the dissonant swarms of the insects that emerge from the foggy and pestilential swamps. Insects, frogs, lice, flies, fleas and bedbugs—all born of the corrupted diseased germination of larvae. And my hunger is fed by these putrefying beings in decomposition. My rite is a purifier of forces. But malignancy exists in the jungle. I swallow a mouthful of blood that fills me entirely. I hear cymbals and trumpets and tambourines that fill the air with

noise and uproar drowning out the silence of the disc of the sun and its marvel. I want a cloak woven from threads of solar gold. The sun is the magical tension of the silence. On my journey to the mysteries I hear the carnivorous plant that laments times immemorial: and I have obscene nightmares beneath the sick winds. I am enchanted, seduced, transfixed by furtive voices. The almost unintelligible cuneiform inscriptions speak of how to conceive and give formulae about how to feed from the force of darkness. They speak of naked and crawling females. And the solar eclipse causes secret terror that nonetheless announces a splendor of heart. I place upon my hair the bronze diadem.

Beyond thought—even further beyond it—is the ceiling I looked at when I was an infant. Suddenly I was crying. It was already love. Or I wasn't even crying. I was on the lookout. Scrutinizing the ceiling. The instant is the vast egg of lukewarm entrails.

Now it's early morning again.

But at dawn I think that we are the contemporaries of the following day. May the God help me: I am lost. I need you terribly. We must be two. So that the wheat can grow tall. I am so earnest that I'm going to stop.

I was born a few instants ago and I am dimmed.

The crystals clink and sparkle. The wheat is ripe: the bread is shared out. But with sweetness? It's important to know. I don't think just as the diamond doesn't think. I shine wholly limpid. I have neither hunger nor thirst: I am. I have two eyes that are open. Toward the nothing. Toward the ceiling.

I'm going to make an adagio. Read slowly and with peace. It's a wide fresco.

Being born is like this:

The sunflowers slowly turn their corollas toward the sun. The wheat is ripe. The bread is eaten with sweetness. My impulse connects to that of the roots of the trees.

Birth: the poor have a prayer in Sanskrit. They ask for nothing: they are poor in spirit. Birth: the Africans have black and dark skin. Many are the sons of the Queen of Sheba and King Solomon. The Africans to put me to sleep, I newly born, intone a primary rigmarole where they sing monotonously that the mother-in-law, as soon as they go out, comes and takes a bunch of bananas.

There's a love song of theirs that also says monotonously the lament I make my own: why do I love you if you don't return my love? I send messengers in vain; when I greet you you hide your face from me; why do I love you if you don't even notice me? There is also a lullaby for elephants who go bathe in the river. I am African: a thread of a sad and wide and sylvan lament runs through my voice that sings to you. The whites whipped the blacks. But as the swan secretes an oil that makes its skin impermeable—in that way the blacks' pain cannot enter and does not hurt. You can transform pain into pleasure—a “click” is enough. Black swan?

But there are those who starve to death and all I can do is be born. My rigmarole is: what can I do for them? My answer is: paint a fresco in adagio. I could suffer the hunger of others in silence but a contralto voice makes me sing—I sing dull and black. It's my message of a person alone. A person eats another from hunger. But I fed myself with my own placenta. And I'm not going to bite my nails because this is a tranquil adagio.

I stopped to drink cool water: the glass at this instant-now is of thick faceted crystal and with thousands of glints of instants. Are objects halted time?

The moon is still full. Clocks stopped and the sound of a hoarse carillon runs down the wall. I want to be buried with the watch on my wrist so that

in the earth something can pulse time.

I am so broad. I am coherent—my canticle is profound. Slow. But rising. Rising still. If it rises much more it will become full moon and silence, and phantasmagoric lunar soil. On the lookout for the time that stops. What I write you is serious. It will become a hard imperishable object. What is coming is unexpected. To be uselessly sincere I must say that now it is six fifteen in the morning.

The risk—I'm daring to discover new lands. Where never human steps trod. First I must pass through the perfumed vegetable matter. I was given a night jessamine that is on my terrace. I'm going to start making my own perfume: I buy the right alcohol and the essence of whatever is already crushed and especially the fixer which must be of purely animal origin. Heavy musk. This is the final low chord of the adagio. My number is 9. It's 7. It's 8. All beyond thought. If all this exists, then I am. But why this unease? It's because I'm not living in the only way that exists for everyone to live and I don't even know which one it is. Uncomfortable. I don't feel well. I don't know what it is. But something is wrong and making me uneasy. Yet I am being frank and playing fair. I show my cards. I just don't tell the facts of my life: I'm secretive by nature. So what's wrong? I just know that I don't want cheating. I refuse. I deepened myself but I don't believe in myself because my thought is invented.

I can already prepare for the "he" or "she." The adagio reached its end. So I start. I don't lie. My truth sparkles like a pendant on a crystal chandelier.

But it is hidden. I can stand it because I'm strong: I ate my own placenta.

Though everything is so fragile. I feel so lost. I live off a secret that glows in luminous rays that would darken me if I didn't cover them with a heavy cloak of false certainties. May the God help me: I am without a guide and it is dark once again.

Will I have to die again in order to be born once again? I accept.

I'll return to the unknown part of myself and when I am born shall speak of "he" or "she." For now, what sustains me is the "that" that is an "it." To create a being out of oneself is very serious. I am creating myself. And walking in complete darkness in search of ourselves is what we do. It hurts. But these are the pains of childbirth: a thing is born that is. Is itself. It is hard as a dry stone. But the core is soft and alive, perishable, perilous *it*. Life of elementary matter.

As the God has no name I shall give Him the name of Simptar. It belongs to no language. I shall give myself the name of Amptala. As far as I know no such name exists. Perhaps in a language before Sanskrit, *it* language. I hear the tick-tock of the clock: so I make haste. The tick-tock is *it*.

I think I am not going to die in the next instant because the doctor who examined me thoroughly said that I am in perfect health. See? the instant passed and I didn't die. I want to be buried straight in the ground though inside a coffin. I don't want to be filed in a wall as in the São João Batista cemetery where there's no more room in the ground. So they invented those diabolical walls where you are held as in a filing cabinet.

Now it is an instant. Do you feel it? I do.

The air is "*it*" and has no perfume. I like that too. But I like night jessamine, musky because its sweetness is a surrender to the moon. I've eaten jelly made from small scarlet roses: its taste blesses us even as it assaults. How to reproduce the taste in words? The taste is one and the words are many. As for music, where does it go? The only concrete thing in music is the instrument. Far beyond thought I have a musical background. But even farther beyond there is the beating heart. Therefore the most profound thought is a beating heart.

I want to die with life. I swear that I shall only die profiting from the last instant. There is a profound prayer within me that will be born I don't know when. I would so like to die of health. Like someone exploding. Éclater is better: j'éclate. For now there's dialogue with you. Then it will be monologue. Then the silence. I know that there will be an order.

Chaos readies itself again like musical instruments that are tuned before the electronic music begins. I am improvising and the beauty of what I improvise is a fugue. I feel throbbing within me the prayer that has not yet come. I feel that I shall ask for the facts just to run off me without getting me wet. I am ready for the great silence of death. I will go to sleep.

I got up. The coup de grâce. Because I'm tired of defending myself. I'm innocent. Even naive because I surrender without any guarantees. I was born by Order. I'm entirely calm. I breathe by Order. I have no lifestyle: I reached the impersonal, which is so difficult. Soon the Order will command me to surpass the maximum. Surpassing the maximum is living the pure element. There are people who can't stand it: they vomit. But I am used to blood.

What beautiful music I can hear in the depths of me. It is made of geometric lines crisscrossing in the air. It is chamber music. Chamber music has no melody. It is a way of expressing the silence. I'm sending you chamber writing.

And this writing I'm attempting is a way of thrashing myself free. I'm terrified. Why were there dinosaurs on this Earth? how does a race die out?

I notice that I'm writing as if I were between sleep and wakefulness.

It's because I suddenly see that I haven't been understanding for a long time. Is the edge of my knife growing blunt? It seems more probable to me that I don't understand why what I am seeing now is difficult: I'm slyly coming into contact with a reality new to me that still has no corresponding

thoughts and not even a word that signifies it—it is a sensation beyond thought.

And here's where my evil rules me. I am still the cruel queen of the Medes and the Persians and am also a slow evolution that throws itself like a drawbridge to a future whose milky clouds I'm already breathing. My aura is of the mystery of life. I surpass myself abdicating from my name, and then I am the world. I follow the voice of the world with a single voice.

What I write to you has no beginning: it's a continuation. From the words of this chant, chant which is mine and yours, a halo arises that transcends the phrases, do you feel it? My experience comes from having already managed to paint the halo of things. The halo is more important than the things and the words. The halo is dizzying. I plunge the word into the deserted emptiness: it's a word like a slim monolithic block that gives off shadow. And it's a heralding trumpet. The halo is the *it*.

I need to feel again the *it* of animals. For a long time I haven't been in contact with primitive animal life. I need to study animals. I want to capture the *it* in order not to paint an eagle and a horse, but a horse with the open wings of a great eagle.

I shiver all over when I come into physical contact with animals or simply see them. Animals fantasticate me. They are time that does not measure itself. I seem to have a certain horror for the living creature that is not human and that has my own instincts though free and indomitable. The animal never substitutes one thing for another.

Animals don't laugh. Though sometimes dogs laugh. Besides their panting mouths their smile is transmitted by eyes that start to shine and become more sensual, while their tails wag in joyous expectation. But cats never laugh. A "he" I know wants nothing more to do with cats. He's through with them forever because he had a certain female cat who periodically got frenzied. When she was in heat her instincts were so imperative that, after

long and plangent meows, she would throw herself from the roof and injure herself on the ground.

Sometimes I get electrified when I see animals. I'm now hearing the ancestral cry within me: I no longer seem to know who is the creature, the animal or me. And I get all confused. It seems I get scared of facing up to stifled instincts that I'm forced to acknowledge in the presence of the animal.

I knew a "she" who humanized animals talking to them and giving them her own characteristics. I don't humanize animals because it's an offense—you must respect their nature—I am the one who animalizes myself. It's not hard and comes simply. It's just a matter of not fighting it and it's just surrendering.

Nothing is more difficult than surrendering to the instant. That difficulty is human pain. It is ours. I surrender in words and surrender when I paint.

Holding a little bird in the half-closed cup of your hand is terrible, like having the trembling instants inside your hand. The frightened little bird chaotically beats thousands of wings and suddenly you have in your half-closed hand the thin wings struggling and suddenly you can't bear it and quickly open your hand to free the light prisoner. Or you hand it quickly back to its owner so that he can give it the relatively greater freedom of the cage. Birds—I want them in the trees or flying far from my hands. I may one day grow intimate with them and take pleasure in their lightweight presence of an instant. "Take pleasure in their lightweight presence" gives me the feeling of having written a complete sentence because it says exactly what it is: the levitation of the birds.

It would never occur to me to have an owl, though I have painted them in caves. But a "she" found a fledgling on the forest floor in Santa Teresa all alone and bereft of a mother. She took it home. She cuddled it. She fed it and cooed to it and eventually found out that it liked raw meat. When it

grew up you might expect it to flee immediately but it was in no hurry to go off in search of its destiny that would be to join others of its mad race: it had grown fond, that diabolical bird, of the girl. Until in a leap—as if struggling with itself—it freed itself with a flight into the depth of the world.

I have seen wild horses in the meadows where at night the white horse—king of nature—cast into the high air its long neigh of glory. I have had perfect relations with them. I remember standing with the same haughtiness as the horse and running my hand through its naked fur. Through its wild mane. I felt like this: the woman and the horse.

I know old stories but that renews themselves now. The he told me that for some time he lived with part of his family in a little village in a valley in the high snowy Pyrenees. In the winter the starving wolves came down from the mountains to the village on the track of prey. All the inhabitants bolted themselves attentive in their houses sheltering in the main room sheep and horses and dogs and goats, human warmth and animal warmth—all alertly hearing the scraping of the claws of the wolves upon the closed doors. Listening. Listening.

I am melancholy. It is morning. But I know the secret of pure mornings. And I relax in the melancholy.

I know the story of a rose. Does it seem strange to you to speak of a rose when I am talking about animals? But it acted in a way that recalls the animal mysteries. Every two days I would buy a rose and place it in water in a vase made specially narrow to hold the long stem of a single flower. Every two days the rose would wilt and I would exchange it for another. Until one certain rose. It was rose-colored without coloring or grafting just naturally of the most vivid rose color. Its beauty expanded the heart by great breadths. It seemed so proud of the turgescence of its wide open corolla and of its own petals that its haughtiness held it almost erect. Because it was not completely erect: with graciousness it bent over its stem which was fine and fragile. An intimate relationship intensely developed between me and the

flower: I admired her and she seemed to feel admired. And she became so glorious in her apparition and was observed with such love that days went by and she did not wilt: her corolla remained wide open and swollen, fresh as a newborn flower. She lasted in beauty and life an entire week. Only then did she start to show signs of some fatigue. Then she died. It was with reluctance that I replaced her. And I never forgot her. The strange thing is that my maid asked me once out of the blue: “and that rose?” I didn’t ask which one. I knew. That rose that lived from love given at length was remembered because the woman had seen how I looked at the flower and transmitted to her the waves of my energy. She had blindly intuited that something had gone on between me and the rose. That rose—made me want to call it “jewel of my life,” because I often give things names—had so much instinct by nature that I and she had been able to live each other profoundly, as only can happen between beast and man.

Not having been born an animal is a secret nostalgia of mine. They sometimes clamor for many generations from afar and I can’t respond except by growing restless. It’s the call.

This free air, this wind that strikes me in the soul of the face leaving it troubled in an imitation of an anguished ever-new ecstasy, anew and always, every time the plunge into a bottomless thing into which I fall always ceaselessly falling until I die and achieve at last silence. Oh sirocco wind, I do not forgive thee for death, thou who bringest me a damaged memory of things lived that, alas for me, always repeat themselves, even in other and different forms. The lived thing scares me as the future scares me. That, like things that have passed, is intangible, mere supposition.

I am at this instant in a white void awaiting the next instant. Measuring time is just a working hypothesis. But whatever exists is perishable and this forces us to measure immutable and permanent time. It never began and never will end. Never.

I heard about a she who died in bed but screaming: my light’s going out! Until there was the favor of the coma inside which she freed herself from

her body and had no fear of death.

Before writing to you I perfume myself all over.

I know you all over because I have lived you all over. In me life is profound. The early hours find me pale from having lived the night of deep dreams. Though sometimes I float on a visible shoal that has beneath it dark blue almost black depths. That is why I write to you. On a waft of thick seaweed and in the tender wellspring of love.

I'm going to die: there's that tension like that of a bow about to loose an arrow. I remember the sign of Sagittarius: half man and half animal. The human part in classical rigidity holds the bow and arrow. The bow could shoot at any instant and hit the target. I know that I shall hit the target.

Now I'm going to write wherever my hand leads: I won't fiddle with whatever it writes. This is a way to have no lag between the instant and I: I act in the core of the instant. But there's still some lag. It starts like this: as love impedes death, and I don't know what I mean by that. I trust in my own incomprehension that gives me life free of understanding, I lost friends, I don't understand death. The horrible duty is to go to the end. And counting on no one. To live your life yourself. And to suffer as much to dull myself a bit. Because I can no longer carry the sorrows of the world. What can I do when I feel totally what other people are and feel? I live them but no longer have the strength. I don't want to tell even myself certain things. It would be to betray the is-itself. I feel that I know some truths. Which I already foresee. But truths have no words. Truths or truth? I'm not going to speak of the God, He is my secret. The sun is shining today. The beach was full of a nice wind and a freedom. And I was on my own. Without needing anybody. It's hard because I need to share what I feel with you. The calm sea. But on the lookout and suspicious. As if a calm like that couldn't last. Something's always about to happen. The unforeseen, improvised and fatal, fascinates me. I have started to communicate so strongly with you that I stopped being while still existing. You became an I. It's so hard to speak and say things that can't be said. It's so silent. How to translate the silence

of the real encounter between the two of us? So hard to explain: I looked straight at you for a few instants. Such moments are my secret. There was what's called perfect communion. I call it an acute state of happiness. I'm terribly lucid and it seems I'm reaching a higher plane of humanity. Or of unhumanity—the *it*.

What I do by involuntary instinct cannot be described.

What am I doing in writing to you? trying to photograph perfume.

I'm writing to you seated beside an open window up in my studio.

I'm writing you this facsimile of a book, the book of someone who doesn't know how to write; but that's because in the lightest realm of speaking I almost don't know how to speak. Particularly speaking to you in writing, I who got used to your being the audience, however distracted, of my voice. When I paint I respect the material I use, I respect its primordial fate. So when I write you I respect the syllables.

New instant in which I see what is coming. Though to speak of the instant of vision I must be more discursive than the instant: many instants will pass before I unfold and exhaust the single and quick complexity of a glance.

I'm writing to you in time with my breath. Shall I always be hermetic as in my painting? Because it seems you have to be terribly explicit. Am I explicit? I don't really care. Now I'm going to light a cigarette. Perhaps I'll go back to the typewriter or perhaps I'll stop right here forever. I, who am never good enough.

I came back. I'm thinking about turtles. Once I said by pure intuition that the turtle was a dinosauric animal. Later I read that it really is. I have the strangest thoughts. One day I'll paint turtles. They interest me a lot. All living beings, except man, are a scandal of astonishment: we were modelled and a lot of raw material was left over—*it*—and so the beasts were formed.

Why a turtle? Maybe the title of what I'm writing you should be a little like that and in the form of a question: "What about turtles?" You who are reading me would say: it's true that it's been a long time since I thought about turtles.

I suddenly got so distressed that I might just say enough already and finish what I'm writing to you, it's more based on blind words. Even for unbelievers there's the instant of despair that is divine: the absence of the God is an act of religion. At this very instant I'm asking the God to help me. I'm needing. Needing more than human strength. I am strong but also destructive. The God must come to me since I haven't gone to Him. Let the God come: please. Though I don't deserve it. Come. Or perhaps those who least deserve Him need Him most. I'm restless and harsh and hopeless. Though I have love inside myself. It's just that I don't know how to use love. Sometimes it scratches like barbs. If I received so much love inside me and nonetheless am restless it's because I need the God to come. Come before it's too late. I'm in danger like every person who lives. And the only thing I can expect is precisely the unexpected. But I know that I shall have peace before death and that one day I shall taste the delicateness of life. I shall notice—as we eat and live the taste of food. My voice falls into the abyss of your silence. You read me in silence. But in this unlimited silent field I unfurl my wings, free to live. So I accept the worst and enter the core of death and that is why I'm alive. The feeling core. And that *it* makes me quiver.

Now I shall speak of the sadness of flowers so as to feel more of the order of whatever exists. Before I do, I'll give you the nectar with pleasure, sweet juice that many flowers contain and that insects seek with greed. The pistil is the flower's female organ that generally occupies the centre and contains the beginnings of the seed. Pollen is fertilizing powder produced in the stamens and contained in the anthers. The stamen is the flower's masculine organ. It's composed of the filament and the anther in the lower section surrounding the pistil. Fertilization is the union of the two elements of reproduction—masculine and feminine—from which comes the fertilized

fruit. “And Yahweh God planted a garden in Eden which is in the East, and there he put the man whom He had formed” (Gen. II-8).

I want to paint a rose.

Rose is the feminine flower that gives herself wholly and such that the only thing left to her is the joy of having given herself. Her perfume is a crazy mystery. When inhaled deeply it touches the intimate depth of the heart and leaves the inside of the entire body perfumed. The way she opens herself into a woman is so beautiful. The petals have a good taste in the mouth — all you have to do is try. Yet rose is not *it* but *she*. The scarlet ones are of great sensuality. The white ones are the peace of the God. It's very rare to find white ones at the florists'. The yellow ones are of a happy alarm. The pink ones are in general fleshier and have the perfect color. The orange ones are produced by grafting and are sexually attractive.

Pay attention and as a favour: I'm inviting you to move to a new kingdom.

Now the carnation has an aggressiveness that comes from a certain irritation. The ends of its petals are rough and impudent. The carnation's perfume is somehow mortal. Red carnations bellow in violent beauty. The white ones recall the little coffin of a dead child—that's when the scent becomes pungent and we turn our heads away in horror. How to transplant the carnation onto canvas?

The sunflower is the great child of the sun. So much so that it knows how to turn its enormous corolla toward the one who made it. It doesn't matter if it's father or mother. I don't know. I wonder if the sunflower is a feminine or masculine flower? I think masculine.

The violet is introverted and its introspection is profound. They say it hides away out of modesty. Not true. It hides away in order to capture its own secret. Its almost-not-perfume is a smothered glory but demands that people

seek it. It never shouts its perfume. Violet says frivolous things that cannot be said.

The golden everlasting is always dead. Its dryness aspires to eternity. Its name in Greek means: sun of gold. The daisy is a happy little flower. It is simple and on the surface of the skin. It has but a single layer of petals. Its centre is a child's game.

The beautiful orchid is exquisite and unpleasant. It isn't spontaneous. It needs a glass dome. But it is a magnificent woman and that cannot be denied. Nor can it be denied that it is noble because it is epiphytic. Epiphytes are born on other plants without however taking nutrition from them. I was lying when I said it was unpleasant. I adore orchids. They're born artificial, they're born art.

The tulip is only a tulip in Holland. A single tulip simply is not. They need an open field in order to be.

Cornflowers only grow amidst the wheat. In their humility they have the audacity to appear in various shapes and colors. The cornflower is biblical. In the nativity scenes of Spain it isn't separated from the stalks of wheat. It is a little beating heart.

But angelica is dangerous. It has the perfume of the chapel. It brings ecstasy. It recalls the Host. Many wish to eat it and fill their mouths with the intense sacred scent.

Jasmine is for lovers. It makes you want to put an ellipsis now. They walk holding hands, swinging their arms and giving each other gentle kisses to the fragrant almost-sound of jasmine.

Bird-of-paradise is pure masculinity. It has an aggressiveness of love and of healthy pride. It seems to have a cock's comb and his crow. It just doesn't wait for dawn. The violence of your beauty.

Night jessamine has a perfume of the full moon. It's phantasmagoric and a bit frightening and is for people who like danger. It only emerges at night with its dizzying scent. Night jessamine is silent. And also belongs to the deserted street corner and in the dark and the gardens of houses whose lights are off and windows are shut. It's highly dangerous: it's a whistle in the dark, which no one can bear. But I can bear it because I love danger. As for the succulent flower of the cactus, it is large and scented and of a vivid color. It's the succulent revenge that the desert plant makes. It is splendor being born of the despotic sterility.

I can't be bothered to speak of edelweiss. Because it's found at an altitude of three thousand four hundred metres. It's white and woolly. Rarely reachable: it's aspiration.

Geranium is the flower of window boxes. You find it in São Paulo, in the neighborhood of Grajaú and in Switzerland.

Giant water lilies are in the Botanical Gardens in Rio de Janeiro. Enormous and up to two metres in diameter. Aquatic, they're to die for. They are the Amazonian: the dinosaur of flowers. They give off great calm. Both majestic and simple. And despite living on the water's surface they cast shade. What I'm writing you is in Latin: *de natura florum*. Later I'll show you my study already transformed into a linear design.

The chrysanthemum is of a deep happiness. It speaks through its color and its unruly shock of hair. It's a flower that untidily controls its own wildness.

I think I'm going to have to ask permission to die. But I can't, it's too late. I heard "The Firebird"—and drowned entirely.

I must interrupt because—didn't I say? didn't I say that one day a thing would happen to me? Well it just happened. A man called João spoke to me on the phone. He grew up in the depths of the Amazon. And he says that there's a legend there about a talking plant. It's called the *tajá*. And they say

that once indigenous people have charmed it in a ritual way, it may even say a word. João told me something that has no explanation: once he came home late and when he was walking down the hall where the plant was he heard the word “João.” So he thought it was his mother calling him and replied: I’m coming. He went upstairs but found his mother and father snoring and sound asleep.

I’m tired. My tiredness comes often because I’m an extremely busy person: I look after the world. Every day I look from my terrace at a section of beach and sea and see the thick foam is whiter and that during the night the waters crept forward uneasy. I see this by the mark which the waves leave upon the sand. I look at the almond trees on the street where I live. Before going to sleep I look after the world and see if the night sky is starry and navy blue because on certain nights instead of being black the sky seems to be an intense navy blue, a color I’ve painted in stained glass. I like intensities. I look after the boy who is nine years old and dressed in rags and all skin and bones. He will get tuberculosis, if he doesn’t already have it. In the Botanical Gardens, then, I get worn out. With my glance I must look after thousands of plants and trees and especially the giant water lily. It’s there. And I look at her.

Note that I don’t mention my emotional impressions: I lucidly speak about some of the thousands of things and people I look after. Nor is it a job because I don’t earn any money from it. I just get to know what the world is like.

Is it a lot of work to look after the world? Yes. For example: it forces me to remember the inexpressive and therefore frightening face of the woman I saw on the street. With my eyes I look after the misery of the people who live on the hillsides.

You will no doubt ask me why I look after the world. It’s because I was born charged with the task.

As a child I looked after a line of ants: they walk single file carrying a tiny piece of leaf. That doesn't keep each one from communicating something to the ones coming the other way. Ant and bee are not *it*. They are *they*.

I read the book about the bees and ever since have looked after the queen bee most of all. Bees fly and deal with flowers. Is that banal? I saw it myself. Noting the obvious is part of the job. Inside each little ant fits a whole world that will escape me if I'm not careful. For example: an instinctive sense of organization, language beyond the supersonic, and feelings of sex fit in the ant. Now I can't find a single ant to look at. I know there wasn't a massacre because otherwise I'd have already heard.

Looking after the world also demands a lot of patience: I have to wait for the day when an ant turns up.

I just haven't found anyone to report back to. Or have I? Since I'm reporting back to you right here. I'm going to report back to you right now on that spring that was so dry. The radio crackled as it picked up your static. Clothing bristled as it let go of the electricity of the body and the comb raised magnetized hair—that was a hard spring. It was exhausted by the winter and budded all electric. Wherever it was it headed afar. There had never been so many paths. We spoke little, you and I. I don't know why the whole world was so annoyed and electronically able. But able to what? The body heavy with sleep. And our big eyes inexpressive as the wide-open eyes of a blind man. On the terrace the fish was in an aquarium and we drank juice in that hotel bar overlooking the landscape. With the wind came the dream of goats: at the next table a solitary faun. We looked at our glasses of ice-cold juice and dreamed statically inside the transparent glass. "What did you say?" you were asking. "I didn't say anything." Days and more days passed and everything in that danger and the geraniums so scarlet. An instant of tuning-in was all it took and once again we picked up the ragged static of spring in the wind: the goats' impudent dream and the fish all empty and our sudden inclination to steal fruit. The faun now crowned in solitary leaps. "What?" "I didn't say anything." But I noticed a first rumble like that of a heart beating beneath the earth. I quietly put my

ear to the ground and heard summer forcing its way in and my heart beneath the earth—"nothing! I said nothing!"—and I felt the patient brutality with which the closed earth was opening inside in birth, and I knew with what weight of sweetness the summer was ripening a hundred thousand oranges and I knew that the oranges were mine. Because that is what I wanted.

I'm proud that I can always feel a change in the weather coming. There's a thing in the air—the body alerts me that something new is coming and I bristle all over. I don't know why. That very spring I was given the plant called primula. It's so mysterious that in its mystery is contained the inexplicable part of nature. It doesn't look at all unique. But on the precise day when spring starts its leaves die and in their place are born closed flowers that have an extremely dumbfounding feminine and masculine perfume.

We're sitting nearby and vaguely watching. And suddenly they start leisurely opening and surrendering to the new season in front of our aghast eyes: it's spring that is moving in.

But when winter comes I give and give and give. I bundle up quite a lot. I hug nests of people to my warm breast. And you hear the noise of someone having hot soup. I am now living rainy days: the time nears for me to give.

Can't you see that this is like a child being born? It hurts. Pain is exacerbated life. The process hurts. Coming-to-be is a slow and slow good pain. It's the wide stretching as far one can go. And your blood thanks you. I breathe, I breathe. The air is *it*. Air with wind is already a he or she. If I had to force myself to write you I would be so sad. Sometimes I can't stand the strength of inspiration. Then I paint with a heavy heart. It's so good that things don't depend on me.

I've spoken a lot about death. But I'm going to speak to you about the breath of life. When a person is already no longer breathing you give

mouth-to-mouth resuscitation: you place your mouth upon the other person's and breathe. And the other starts to breathe again. This exchange of breaths is one of the most beautiful things that I've ever heard about life. In fact the beauty of this mouth-to-mouth is dazzling me.

Oh, how uncertain everything is. And yet part of the Order. I don't even know what I'll write to you in the next sentence. We never say the final truth. May whoever knows the truth come forward. And speak. We shall listen contritely.

. . . suddenly I saw him and he was such an extraordinarily handsome and virile man that I felt a joy of creation. Not that I wanted him for myself just as I don't want for myself the boy I saw with the hair of an archangel running after a ball. I just wanted to look. The man looked at me for an instant and smiled calmly: he knew how beautiful he was and I know that he knew that I didn't want him for myself. He smiled because he felt no threat at all. Because beings exceptional in any way are subject to more dangers than your average person. I crossed the street and took a taxi. The breeze made the hairs on my neck stand up. And I was so happy that I huddled in the corner of the taxi out of fear because happiness hurts. And all that caused by having seen the handsome man. I still didn't want him for myself—what I like are people who are a little ugly and at the same time harmonious, but he somehow had given me a lot with his smile of camaraderie among people who understand each other. I didn't understand any of this.

The courage to live: I keep hidden what needs to be hidden and needs to irradiate in secret.

I hush.

Because I don't know what my secret is. Tell me yours, teach me about the secret of each one of us. Not a slanderous secret. It's just this: secret.

And it has no formulas.

I think I'll now have to beg your pardon to die a little. Please—may I? I won't be long. Thank you.

. . . No. I didn't manage to die. Am I ending this “word-thing” here by a voluntary act? Not yet.

I am transfiguring reality—what is it that's escaping me? why don't I reach out my hand and take it? It's because I only dreamed of the world but never saw it.

What I'm writing to you is contralto. It's negro-spiritual. It has a choir and lit candles. I'm now having a dizzy spell. I'm a bit afraid. Where will my freedom lead me? What is this that I'm writing to you? That leaves me all alone. But I go and pray and my freedom is ruled by the Order—I'm already without fear. All that's guiding me is a sense of discovery. Beyond what's beyond thought.

Following myself along is really what I'm doing when writing to you and now: following myself without knowing where it will lead me. Sometimes it's so hard to follow myself along. Because I'm following something that's still nothing more than a nebula. Sometimes I end up giving up.

Now I'm afraid. Because I'm going to tell you something. Wait until the fear passes.

It passed. It's this: dissonance is harmonious to me. Melody sometimes wears me out. And also the so-called “leitmotif.” I want in music and in what I write to you and in what I paint, I want geometric streaks that cross in the air and form a disharmony that I understand. Pure *it*. My being is completely absorbed and grows slightly intoxicated. What I'm telling you is very important. And I work while I sleep: because that is when I move inside the mystery.

Today is Sunday morning. On this Sunday of sun and Jupiter I am alone in the house. I suddenly doubled over as if in the deep pain of childbirth—and saw that the girl in me was dying. I shall never forget that bloody Sunday. It will take time for the wound to heal. And here I am tough and silent and heroic. Without a girl inside me. All lives are heroic lives.

Creation escapes me. And I don't even want to know so much. That my heart beats in my breast is enough. The impossible living of the *it* is enough.

Right this minute I feel my heart beating out of control inside my breast. It's reasserting itself because in the past few sentences I was just thinking on my surface. So the basis of existence turns up to wash over and erase the traces of the thought. The sea erases the traces of the waves on the sand. Oh God, how happy I'm feeling. What ruins happiness is fear.

I get scared. But my heart's beating. The inexplicable love makes the heart beat faster. The sole guarantee is that I was born. You are a form of being I, and I a form of being you: those are the limits of my possibility.

I'm in a pleasure to die for. Sweet prostration as I speak to you. But there's the waiting. Waiting is feeling voracious about the future. One day you said you loved me. I pretend to believe it and live, from day to day, in joyful love. But remembering with longing is like saying farewell once again.

A fantastical world surrounds me and is me. I hear the mad song of a little bird and crush butterflies between my fingers. I'm a fruit eaten away by a worm. And I await the orgasmic apocalypse. A dissonant throng of insects surrounds me, light of an oil lamp that I am. I then go too far in order to be. I'm in a trance. I penetrate the surrounding air. What a fever: I can't stop living. In this dense jungle of words that thickly wrap around whatever I feel and think and live and transform everything I am into something of mine that nonetheless remains entirely outside me. I'm watching myself think. What I wonder is: who is it in me who is even outside of thinking?

I'm writing you all this because it's a challenge which I have to accept with humility. I'm haunted by my ghosts, by whatever is mythic and fantastical—life is supernatural. And I walk on a tightrope up to the edge of my dream. Guts tortured by voluptuousness guide me, fury of impulses. Before I organise myself, I must disorganize myself internally. To experience that first and fleeting primary state of freedom. Of the freedom to err, fall and get up again.

But if I hope to understand in order to accept things—the act of surrender will never happen. I must take the plunge all at once, a plunge that includes comprehension and especially incomprehension. And who am I to dare to think? What I have to do is surrender. How is it done? I know however that only by walking do you know how to walk and—miracle—find yourself walking.

I, who manufacture the future like a diligent spider. And the best of me is when I know nothing and manufacture whatever.

Because I suddenly see that I know nothing. Is the blade of my knife getting blunt? I think it's more likely that I don't understand because what I'm seeing now is difficult: I'm stealthily entering into contact with a reality that is new to me and still doesn't have corresponding thoughts, and much less any word that signifies it. It's more of a feeling beyond thought.

How can I explain it to you? I'll try. It's that I'm perceiving a crooked reality. Seen through an oblique cut. Only now have I sensed the oblique of life. I used to only see through straight and parallel cuts. I didn't notice the sly crooked line. Now I sense that life is other. That living is not only unwinding rough feelings—it's something more bewitching and gracile, without losing its fine animal vigor for that. Upon this unusually crooked life I have placed my heavy paw, causing existence to wither in its most oblique and fortuitous and yet at the same time subtly fatal aspects. I understood the inevitability of happenstance and that is no contradiction.

The oblique life is very intimate. I shall say no more about this intimacy so as not to harm thinking-feeling with dry words. To leave the obliqueness in its own uninhibited independence.

And I also know a way of life that is gentle pride, grace in movements, slight and continuous frustration, with a skill in avoidance that comes from a long and ancient history. As a sign of revolt only a weightless and eccentric irony. There's a side to life that is like drinking coffee on a terrace in the coldness of winter and wrapped in wool.

I also know a way of life that is slight shadow unfurled in the wind and swaying slightly over the ground: life that is floating shadow, levitation and dreams in the open day: I live the richness of the earth.

Yes. Life is very oriental. Only a few people chosen by the inevitability of chance have tasted the aloof and delicate freedom of life. It's like knowing how to arrange flowers in a vase: almost useless knowledge. That fleeting freedom of life must never be forgotten: it should be present like a fragrance.

To live this life is more an indirect remembering than a direct living.

It resembles a gentle convalescence from something that nonetheless could have been absolutely terrible. Convalescence from a frigid pleasure. Only for the initiates life then becomes fragilely truthful. And is in the instant-now: you eat the fruit during its ripeness. Could I no longer know what I'm talking about and is everything escaping me without my noticing? I do know—but cautiously because I'm a hair's breadth from not knowing. I feed myself delicately with trivial daily life and drink coffee on the terrace on the threshold of this dusk that looks sickly only because it's sweet and sensitive.

Oblique life? I am well aware that there is a slight detachment between things, they almost collide, there is a detachment among the beings that lose

one other amongst words that almost don't say anything more. But we almost understand one other in this light discord, in this almost that is the only way to stand full life, since a sudden face-to-face encounter with it would frighten us, scare off its delicate spider's web threads. We are askance in order not to jeopardise what we foresee is infinitely other in this life of which I speak to you.

And I live to the side—a place where the central light doesn't burn me. And I speak quietly so that ears have to pay attention and hear me.

But I also know of yet another life. I know and want it and devour it ferociously. It's a life of magical violence. It's mysterious and bewitching. In it snakes entwine while the stars tremble. Drops of water drip in the phosphorescent darkness of the cave. In that dark the flowers intertwine in a humid fairy garden. And I am the sorceress of that silent bacchanal. I feel defeated by my own corruptibility. And I see that I am intrinsically bad. It's only out of pure kindness that I am good. Defeated by myself. Who lead me along the paths of the salamander, the spirit who rules the fire and lives within it. And I give myself as an offering to the dead. I weave spells on the solstice, spectre of an exorcised dragon.

But I don't know how to capture what's happening now except by living everything that happens to me here and now and whatever it may be. I let the free horse run fiery in its pure noble joy. I, who run nervously and only reality delimits me. And when the day reaches its end I hear the crickets and become entirely full and unintelligible. Then come the early hours bulging full of thousands of blaring little birds. And each thing that happens to me I live it here by noting it down. Because I want to feel in my probing hands the living and quivering nerve of the today.

Beyond thought I reach a state. I refuse to divide it up into words—and what I cannot and do not want to express ends up being the most secret of my secrets. I know that I'm scared of the moments in which I don't use thought and that's a momentary state that is difficult to reach, and which, entirely secret, no longer uses the words with which thoughts are produced.

Is not using words to lose your identity? is it getting lost in the harmful essential shadows?

I lose the identity of the world inside myself and exist without guarantees. I achieve whatever is achievable but I live the unachievable and the meaning of me and the world and you isn't obvious. It's fantastic, and I handle myself in these moments with immense delicacy. Is God a form of being? the abstraction that materializes in the nature of all that exists? My roots are in the divine shadows. Drowsy roots. Wavering in the dark shadows.

And suddenly I feel that we shall soon part. My frightened truth is that I was always yours alone and didn't know it. Now I know: I'm alone. I and my freedom that I don't know how to use. Great responsibility of solitude. Whoever isn't lost doesn't know freedom and love it. As for me, I own up to my solitude that sometimes falls into ecstasy as before fireworks. I am alone and must live a certain intimate glory that in solitude can become pain. And the pain, silence. I keep its name secret. I need secrets in order to live.

For each one of us and at some lost moment of life—is a mission announced that we must accomplish? I however refuse any mission. I won't accomplish anything: I just live.

It's so odd and hard to substitute the paintbrush now for that strangely familiar but always remote thing, the word. The extreme and intimate beauty is within it. Yet it's unreachable—and when it's within reach that's when it becomes illusory because once again it remains unreachable. From my painting and these jostling words of mine a silence rises that is also like the substratum of the eyes. There is a thing that escapes me the whole time. When it doesn't escape, I gain a certitude: life is something else. It has an underlying style.

Could it be that in the instant of death I shall force life trying to live more than I can? But I am today.

I write to you in disorder, I well know. But that is how I live. I only work with the lost and found.

But writing for me is frustrating: when writing I'm dealing with the impossible. With the enigma of nature. And of the God. Whoever doesn't know what God is, will never be able to know. In the past is when the God was learned of. It's something already known.

Do I not have a plot to my life? for I am unexpectedly fragmentary. I am piecemeal. My story is living. And I have no fear of failure. Let failure annihilate me, I want the glory of falling. My crippled angel who contorts all elusive, my angel who fell from the heavens to the hell where he lives savoring evil.

This is not a story because I don't know any stories like this but all I know how to do is go along saying and doing: it is the story of instants that flee like fugitive tracks seen from the window of a train.

We will meet this afternoon. And I won't even talk to you about this that I'm writing and which contains what I am and which I give to you as a present though you won't read it. You will never read what I'm writing. And when I've noted down my secret of being—I shall throw it away as if into the sea. I'm writing you because you can't accept what I am. When I destroy my notes on the instants, will I return to my nothing from which I extracted an everything? I must pay the price. The price of someone who has a past that is only renewed with passion in the strange present. When I think of what I already lived through it seems to me I was shedding my bodies along the paths.

It's almost five in the morning. And the light of the fainting dawn, cold blue steel and with the tang and tart sharp taste of the day being born from the dark. And that emerges upon on the surface of time, I livid too, I being born from the shadows, impersonal, I who am *it*.

I'll tell you something: I don't know how to paint either better or worse than I do. I paint a "this." And I write with "this"—that is all I can do. Restless. The liters of blood that circulate in the veins. The muscles contracting and relaxing. The full-moon aura of the body. Parambolic—whatever that word means. Parambolic as I am. I can't sum myself up because you can't add a chair and two apples. I am a chair and two apples. And I cannot be added up.

Once again I'm full of joyful happy love. Whatever you are I quickly breathe in lapping up your halo of wonder before it vanishes in the evaporation of the air. Is my fresh desire to live me and to live you the very tessitura of life? The nature of beings and of things—is God? So maybe if I demand a lot of nature, I would stop dying? Can I violate death and clear within it an opening for life?

I cut the pain of which I write to you and give you my restless joy.

And in this instant-now I see white statues scattered in the perspective of faraway distances far off—farther and farther in the desert where I get lost with empty gaze, I myself a statue to be seen from afar, I who am always getting lost. I am savoring whatever exists. Hushed, aerial, inside my great dream. Since I understand nothing—I therefore adhere to the faltering mobile reality. I reach the real through the dream. I invent you, reality. And hear you like remote bells deafly drowned in the water peeling palpitating. Am I in the core of death? And is that why I am alive? The feeling core. And this *it* exhilarates me. I am alive. Like a wound, flower in the flesh, the path of sorrowful blood is opened within me. With the direct and for that very reason innocent eroticism of the Indians of the Holy Pool. I, exposed to the storms, I, open inscription on the back of a stone, within the large chronological spaces handed down by the man of prehistory. The hot wind of great millenary expanses blows and sings my surface.

Today I used red ochre, yellow ochre, black, and a little white. I sense that I am near springs, pools and waterfalls, all with abundant and fresh waters for my thirst. And I, a savage at last and at last free of the dry days of today:

I trot forward and backward without frontiers. I carry out sun rituals on the slopes of high mountains. But I am also taboo for myself, untouchable because forbidden. Am I the hero that carries with him the burning torch forever in a race?

Ah Force of whatever Exists, help me, Thou whom they call the God. Why does the horrible-terrible call me? that I in my horror want? because my demon is murderous and fears no punishment: but the crime is more important than the punishment. I enliven all of me in my happy instinct for destruction.

Try to understand what I am painting and what I am writing now. I'll explain: in painting as in writing I try to see strictly in the moment in which I see—and not to see through the memory of having seen in a past instant. The instant is this one. The instant is of an imminence that takes my breath away. The instant is in itself imminent. At the same time that I live it, I burst into its passage into another instant.

That was how I saw the church portal that I painted. You argued there was excessive symmetry. Let me explain: the symmetry was the most accomplished thing I did. I lost the fear of symmetry, then of the disorder of inspiration. You need experience or courage to revalue symmetry, when one can easily imitate the falsely asymmetric, one of the most mundane originalities. My symmetry in the church portals is concentrated, accomplished, but not dogmatic. It's touched by the hope that two asymmetries will meet in symmetry. That as a third solution: synthesis. Perhaps that's why the portals look stripped-down, the delicateness of something lived and then relived, and not a certain irresponsible boldness of those who do not know. No, it's not exactly calmness that you find there. There is a tough fight for the thing that though corroded remains standing. And in the denser colors there's the lividity of something crooked that nonetheless keeps on going. My crosses have been bent crooked by centuries of mortification. Are the portals already a herald of altars? The silence of the portals. Their verdigris takes on a hue of something between life and death, an intensity of dusk.

And in the quiet colors is steel and old bronze—and all amplified by a silence of things lost and found on the ground of a steep road. I feel a long road and dust until I reach the resting-place of the painting. Even though the portals don't open. Or is the portal of the church already the church, and when before it you have already arrived?

I struggle not to go beyond the portal. They are walls of a Christ that is absent, but the walls are there and touchable—for the hands also look.

I create the material before I paint it, and the wood becomes as indispensable to my painting as it would be to a sculptor. And the created material is religious: it has the weight of the beams of a monastery. Compact, closed like a closed door. But onto the portal openings were flayed, scratched out by fingernails. And it's through these openings that you see what is inside a synthesis, inside the utopian symmetry. Coagulated color, violence, martyrdom, are the beams that sustain the silence of a religious symmetry.

But now I'm interested in the mystery of the mirror. I'm looking for a way to paint it or to speak of it with the word. But what is a mirror? The word mirror does not exist, only mirrors exist, for a single one is an infinity of mirrors. Somewhere in the world there must be a mine of mirrors. Mirror is not something created but something born. You don't need many to have the sparkling and sleepwalking mine: two are enough, and one reflects the reflection of what the other reflected, in a trembling that is transmitted in an intense and mute telegraphic message, insistent, liquidity in which you can plunge a fascinated hand and pull it out dripping with the reflections of that hard water that is the mirror. Like the seer's crystal ball, it drags me toward the void that for the seer is his field of meditation, and in me the field of silences and silences. And I can barely speak, with so much silence unfurling into others.

Mirror? That crystallized void that has in itself enough space to go ever ceaselessly forward: for mirror is the deepest space that exists. And it is a magic thing: whoever has a broken piece can go with it to meditate in the

desert. Seeing oneself is extraordinary. Like a cat whose fur bristles, I bristle when faced with myself. From the desert I would also return empty, illuminated and translucent, and with the same vibrating silence of a mirror.

Its form doesn't matter: no form manages to circumscribe and alter it. Mirror is light. A tiny piece of mirror is always the whole mirror.

Remove its frame or the lines of its edges, and it grows like spilling water.

What is a mirror? It's the only invented material that is natural. Whoever looks at a mirror, whoever manages to see it without seeing himself, whoever understands that its depth consists of being empty, whoever walks inside its transparent space without leaving the trace of his own image upon it—that somebody has understood its mystery of thing. For that to happen one must surprise it when it's alone, when it's hanging in an empty room, without forgetting that the finest needle before it can transform it into the simple image of a needle, so sensitive is the mirror in its quality of lightest reflection, only image and not the body. Body of the thing.

When painting it I needed my own delicateness in order not to cross it with my own image, since a mirror in which I see myself is already I, only an empty mirror is what the living mirror is. Only a very delicate person can enter the empty room where there is an empty mirror, and with such lightness, with such absence of self, that his image leaves no mark. As a prize, that delicate person will then have penetrated one of the inviolable secrets of things: he saw the mirror itself.

And he discovered the enormous frozen spaces that it has in itself, only interrupted by an occasional block of ice. Mirror is cold and ice. But there is the sequence of darkneses inside it—noticing this is a very rare moment—and one must be on the lookout for days and nights, fasting from oneself, in order to capture and surprise the sequence of darkneses it has inside it. With colors of white and black I recaptured on the canvas its tremulous luminosity. With the same black and white I also recapture, with a cold

shiver, one of its most difficult truths: its frosty silence without color. One must understand the violent absence of color of a mirror in order to recreate it, as one would recreate the violent absence of taste of water.

No, I did not describe the mirror—I was the mirror. And the words are they themselves, without a discursive tone.

I must interrupt to say that “X” is what exists inside me. “X”—I bathe in that this. It’s unpronounceable. All I do not know is in “X.” Death? death is “X.” But much life too for life is unpronounceable. “X” that shakes within me and I fear its pitch: it vibrates like the string of a cello, a tense string that when plucked emits pure electricity, without melody. The unpronounceable instant. An other sensibility is what becomes aware of “X.”

I hope you live “X” so you experience the kind of creating sleep that stretches out through the veins. “X” is neither good nor bad. Always independent. But it only happens to whatever has a body. Though immaterial, it needs our body and the body of the thing. There are objects that are this complete mystery of the “X.” Like whatever vibrates mute. The instants are shards of “X” incessantly exploding. The excess of me starts to hurt and when I am excessive I must give of myself like the milk that if it cannot flow will burst the breast. I release the pressure and return to natural size. The exact elasticity. Elasticity of a supple panther.

A caged black panther. Once I looked a panther right in the eye and she looked at me right in the eye. We transmuted. That fear. I left completely darkened inside, the “X” uneasy. Everything had happened beyond thought. I miss that terror that exchanging glances with the black panther gave me. I know how to terrorize.

Is “X” the breath of the *it*? the cold radiating respiration of *it*? Is “X” a word? The word only refers to a thing and is always unreachable by me. Each of us is a symbol that deals with symbols— everything a point of only reference to the real. We desperately try to find an identity of our own and

the identity of the real. And if we understand ourselves through the symbol that is because we have the same symbols and the same experience of the thing itself: but reality has no synonyms.

I am speaking to you in the abstract and wonder: am I a cantabile aria? No, you cannot sing what I am writing you. Why don't I tackle a theme I could easily flush out? but no: I slink along the wall, I pilfer the flushed-out melody, I walk in the shadow, in that place where so many things go on. Sometimes I drip down the wall, in a place never reached by the sun. My maturing of a theme would already be a cantabile aria—so let somebody else make another song—the song of the maturing of my quartet. This is before the maturing. The melody would be the fact. But what fact has a night that happens entirely on a byway while we slept unaware of anything? Where is the fact? My story is of a calm darkness, of the root asleep in its strength, of the smell which has no scent. And in none of this does the abstract exist. It is the figurative of the unnameable. There is almost no flesh in this quartet of mine. A shame that the word “nerves” is linked to painful vibrations, otherwise it would be a quartet of nerves. Dark strings that, when plucked, do not speak of “other things,” they don't change the topic—they are in and of themselves, they surrender just as they are, without lie or fantasy.

I know that after you read me it's hard to reproduce my song by ear, it's not possible to sing it without having learned it by heart. And how can you learn something by heart if it has no story?

But you will recall something that also happened in the shadow. You will have shared this first mute existence, you will have, as in the calm dream of a calm night, have run with the resin down the tree trunk. Afterwards you will say: I dreamt nothing. Will that be enough? It will. And especially in that primary existence there is a lack of error, and a tone of emotion of someone who could lie but doesn't. Is that enough? It is.

But I also want to paint a theme, I want to create an object. And that object will be—a wardrobe, for what is more concrete? I must study the wardrobe

before painting it. What do I see? I see that the wardrobe looks penetrable because it has a door. But when I open it, I see that penetration has been put off: since inside is also a wooden surface, like a closed door. Function of the wardrobe: to keep drag and disguises hidden. Nature: that of the inviolability of things. Relation to people: we look at ourselves in the mirror on the inside of the door, we always look at ourselves in an inconvenient light because the wardrobe is never in the right place: awkward, it stands wherever it fits, always huge, hunchbacked, shy and clumsy, unaware how to be more discreet, for it has too much presence. A wardrobe is enormous, intrusive, sad, kind.

But suddenly the door-mirror opens—and suddenly, in the movement the door makes, and in the new composition of the room in shadow, into that composition enter flask after flask of glass of fleeting brightness.

Then I can paint the essence of a wardrobe. The essence that is never cantabile. But I want to have the freedom to say unconnected things as a deep way of touching you. Only the erring attracts me, and I love the sin, the flower of the sin.

But what can I do if you are not touched by my defects, whereas I loved yours. My candour was crushed underfoot by you. You didn't love me, only I know that. I was alone. Yours alone. I write to no one and a riff is being made that doesn't exist. I unglued myself from me.

And I want disarticulation, only then am I in the world. Only then do I feel right.

Do feel right. I in my loneliness am ready to explode. Dying must be a mute internal explosion. The body can no longer stand being a body. And what if dying had the taste of food when you're very hungry? And what if dying were a pleasure, selfish pleasure?

Yesterday I was drinking coffee and heard the maid in the laundry room hanging up clothes and singing a melody without words. A kind of extremely mournful dirge. I asked her whose song it was, and she replied: it's just my own nonsense, it's nobody's.

Yes, what I'm writing you is nobody's. And this nobody's freedom is very dangerous. It is like the infinite that has the color of air.

All this that I'm writing is as hot as a hot egg that you quickly toss from one hand to the other and then back to the first in order not to get burned—I once painted an egg. And now as in painting I just say: egg and that is enough.

No, I was never modern. And this happens: when I think a painting is strange that's when it's a painting. And when I think a word is strange that's where it achieves the meaning. And when I think life is strange that's where life begins. I take care not to surpass myself. In all of this is great restraint. And then I get sad just to rest. I even cry gently out of sadness. Then I get up and start again. I just won't tell you a story now is because in that case it would be prostitution. And I'm not writing to please you. Mainly myself. I have to follow the pure line and keep my *it* uncontaminated.

Now I shall write you everything that comes into my mind with the least possible amount of policing. Because I feel attracted to the unknown. But as long as I have myself I won't be alone. It's going to start: I'm going to grab the present in every phrase that dies. Now:

Ah if I had known that it were like that I wouldn't have been born. Ah if I had known I wouldn't have been born. Madness borders the cruellest good sense. This is a brain tempest and one sentence barely has anything to do with the next. I swallow the madness that is no madness—it's something else. Do you understand me? But I'll have to stop because I'm so and so tired that only dying would release me from this fatigue. I'm leaving.

I'm back. Now I'll try once more to bring myself up to date with whatever occurs to me in the moment—and this is how I'll create myself. It's like this:

The ring that you gave me was glass and it broke and the love ended. But sometimes in its place comes the beautiful hate of those who loved and devoured one another. The chair there in front of me is an object to me. Useless while I look at it. Please tell me what time it is so I can know that I am living in that time. I am finding myself: it's deadly because only death concludes me. But I bear it until the end. I'll tell you a secret: life is deadly. I'll have to interrupt everything to tell you this: death is the impossible and intangible. Death is just future to such an extent that there are those who cannot bear it and commit suicide. It's as if life said the following: and there simply was no following. Only the waiting colon. We keep this secret mutely to conceal that every instant is deadly. The chair object interests me. I love objects to the degree that they do not love me. But if I don't understand what I'm writing it's not my fault. I must speak because speaking saves. But I have no word to say. What would a person say to himself in the madness of sincerity? But it would be salvation. Though the terror of sincerity comes from the part of the shadows that connect me to the world and to the creating unconscious of the world. Today is a night with many stars in the sky. It stopped raining. I am blinded. I open my eyes wide and only see. But the secret—that I neither see nor feel. Could I be making here a true orgy of what's behind thought? orgy of words? The record player is broken. I look at the chair and this time it's as if it too looked and saw. The future is mine—as long as I live. I see the flowers in the vase. They are wild flowers and were born without being planted. They are yellow. But my cook said: what ugly flowers. Just because it's hard to love Franciscan things. In the beyond of my thought is the truth that is that of the world. The illogicality of nature. What silence. "God" is of such an enormous silence that it terrifies me. Who invented the chair? It takes courage to write what comes to me: you never know what could come up and scare you. The sacred monster died. In its place was born a girl who lost her mother. I am very well aware I'll have to stop. Not for a lack of words but because those things and especially those I only thought and

didn't write— cannot be said. I'll speak of what is called the experience. It's the experience of asking for help and that help being given. Perhaps it was worth being born in order one day to implore mutely and mutely to receive. I asked for help and it was not refused. I then felt like a tiger with a deadly arrow buried in its flesh and who was slowly circling the fearful people to find out who would have the courage to come up and free it from its pain. And then there is the person who knows that a wounded tiger is only as dangerous as a child. And coming up to the beast, unafraid to touch it, pulls out the embedded arrow.

And the tiger? Can't say thank you. So I sluggishly walk back and forth in front of the person and hesitate. I lick one of my paws and then, since it's not the word that then matters, I silently move off.

What am I in this instant? I am a typewriter making the dry keys echo in the dark and humid early hours. For a long time I haven't been people. They wanted me to be an object. I'm an object. An object dirty with blood. That creates other objects and the typewriter creates all of us. It demands. The mechanism demands and demands my life. But I don't obey totally: if I must be an object let it be an object that screams. There's a thing inside me that hurts. Ah how it hurts and how it screams for help. But tears are missing in the typewriter that I am. I'm an object without destiny. I am an object in whose hands? such is my human destiny. What saves me is the scream. I protest in the name of whatever is inside the object beyond the beyond the thought-feeling. I am an urgent object.

Now—silence and slight amazement.

Because at five in the morning, today July 25th, I fell into a state of grace.

It was a sudden sensation, but so gentle. The luminosity was smiling in the air: exactly that. It was a sigh of the world. I don't know how to explain just as you can't describe the dawn to a blind man. It is unutterable what

happened to me in the form of feeling: I quickly need your empathy. Feel with me. It was a supreme happiness.

But if you have known the state of grace you'll recognise what I'm going to say. I'm not referring to inspiration, which is a special grace that so often happens to those who deal with art.

The state of grace of which I'm speaking is not used for anything. It's as if it came only for us to know that we really exist and the world exists. In this state, beyond the calm happiness that irradiates from people and things, there is a lucidity that I only call weightless because everything in grace is so light. It's a lucidity of one who no longer needs to guess: without effort, he knows. Just that: knows. Don't ask me what, because I can only reply in the same way: he knows.

And there's a physical bliss to which nothing else compares. The body is transformed into a gift. And you feel that it's a gift because you experience, right at the source, the suddenly indubitable present of existing miraculously and materially.

Everything gains a kind of halo that is not imaginary: it comes from the splendor of the mathematical irradiation of things and of the memory of people. You start to feel that all that exists breathes and exhales a most fine resplendence of energy. The truth of the world, however, is impalpable.

It's not even close to what I can barely imagine must be the state of grace of the saints. I have never known that state and cannot even guess at it. It is instead just the grace of a common person turning suddenly real because he is common and human and recognizable.

The discoveries in this sense are unutterable and incommunicable. And unthinkable. That is why in grace I stayed seated, quiet, silent. It's like in an annunciation. Not being however preceded by angels. But it's as if the angel of life came to announce the world to me.

Then I slowly emerged. Not as if I had been in a trance— there’s no trance—you emerge slowly, with the sigh of one who had everything just as the everything is. It’s also already a sigh of longing. Since having experienced gaining a body and a soul, you want more and more. No use wanting: it only comes when it wants and spontaneously.

I wanted to make that happiness eternal through the intermediary of the objectification of the word. Right afterwards I went to look up in the dictionary the word beatitude which I hate as a word and saw that it means spasm of the soul. It speaks of calm happiness—I would however call it transport or levitation. Nor do I like how the dictionary continues: “of one absorbed in mystical contemplation.” That’s not true: I wasn’t meditating in any way, there was no religiosity in me. I’d just had breakfast and was simply living sitting there with a cigarette burning in the ashtray.

I saw when it started and took me. And I saw when it started growing faint and ended. I’m not lying. I hadn’t taken any drug and it wasn’t a hallucination. I knew who I was and who others were.

But now I want to see if I can capture what happened to me by using words. As I use them I’ll be destroying to some extent what I felt— but that’s inevitable. I’m going to call what follows “On the edge of beatitude.” It starts like this, nice and slow:

When you see, the act of seeing has no form—what you see sometimes has form and sometimes doesn’t. The act of seeing is ineffable. And sometimes what is seen is also ineffable. And that’s how it is with a certain kind of thinking-feeling that I’ll call “freedom,” just to give it a name. Real freedom—as an act of perception—has no form. And as the true thought thinks to itself, this kind of thought reaches its objective in the very act of thinking. By that I don’t mean that it either vaguely or gratuitously is. It so happens that the primary thought—as an act of thought—already has a form and is more easily transmitted to itself, or rather, to the very person who is thinking it; and that is why—because it has a form—it has a limited reach.

Whereas the thought called “freedom” is free as an act of thought. It’s so free that even to its thinker it seems to have no author.

The true thought seems to have no author.

And beatitude has that same quality. Beatitude starts in the moment when the act of thinking has freed itself from the necessity of form. Beatitude starts at the moment when the thinking-feeling has surpassed the author’s need to think—he no longer needs to think and now finds himself close to the grandeur of the nothing. I could say of the “everything.” But “everything” is a quantity, and quantity has a limit in its very beginning. The true incommensurability is the nothing, which has no barriers and where a person can scatter their thinking-feeling.

This beatitude is not in itself religious or secular. And none of this necessarily has any bearing on the issue of the existence or non-existence of a God. What I’m saying is that the thought of the man and the way this thinking-feeling can reach an extreme degree of incommunicability—that, without sophism or paradox, is at the same time, for that man, the point of greatest communication. He communicates with himself.

Sleeping brings us very close to this empty and yet full thought. I’m not talking about the dream, which, in this case, would be a primary thought. I’m talking about sleeping. Sleeping is abstracting yourself and scattering into the nothingness.

I also want to tell you that after the freedom of the state of grace also comes the freedom of the imagination also happens. At this very moment I am free.

And beyond the freedom, beyond the certain void I create the calmest of repeating musical waves. The madness of free invention. Do you want to see it with me? Landscape where this music happens? air, green stems, the spread-out sea, silence of a Sunday morning. A slender man with only one

foot has one great transparent eye in the middle of his forehead. A feminine entity slinks up on all fours, says in a voice that seems to come from another space, voice that sounds not like the first voice but in echo of a primary voice that was never heard. The voice is awkward, euphoric and says by force of the habit of a past life: would you like some tea? And doesn't wait for a reply. She grabs a slim ear of golden wheat, and puts it between her toothless gums and pads away on all fours with her eyes open. Eyes immobile as the nose. She needs to move her whole boneless head to look at an object. But what object? The slender man meanwhile has fallen asleep on his foot and let his eye fall asleep without however closing it. Letting your eye fall asleep is about not wanting to see. When it doesn't see, it sleeps. In the silent eye the plain is reflected in a rainbow. The air is marvellous. The musical waves start again. Someone looks at their nails. There's a sound in the distance going: psst, psst! . . . But the man-with-just-one-foot could never imagine that they are calling him. A sound starts up from the side, like the flute that always seems to play from the side—a sound starts up from the side that crosses the musical waves without a tremor, and repeats so long that it ends up carving out the rock with its uninterrupted dripping. It's a highly elevated sound, without friezes. A lament that's happy and measured and sharp like the non-strident and sweet sharpness of a flute. It's the highest and happiest note that a vibration can give. No man on earth could hear it without going mad and starting to smile forever. But the man standing on his only foot—sleeps upright. And the feminine being stretched out on the beach isn't thinking. A new character crosses the deserted plain and disappears limping. You hear: psst; psst! And no one is called.

Now the scene my freedom created is over.

I'm sad. An uneasiness that comes because the ecstasy doesn't fit into the life of the days. Sleep should follow the ecstasy to attenuate its vibration of echoing crystal. The ecstasy must be forgotten.

The days. I got sad because of the diurnal light of steel in which I live. I breathe the smell of steel in the world of the objects.

But now I want to say things that comfort me and that are a little free. For example: Thursday is a day transparent as an insect's wing in the light. Just as Monday is a compact day. Ultimately, far beyond thought, I live from these ideas, if ideas is what they are. They are sensations that transform into ideas because I must use words. Even just using them mentally. The primary thought thinks with words. The "freedom" frees itself from the slavery of the word.

And God is a monstrous creation. I fear God because he is too total for my size. And I also feel a kind of modesty toward Him: there are things of mine that not even He knows. Fear? I know a she who is terrified by butterflies as if they were supernatural. And the divine part of butterflies is terrifying indeed. And I know a he who shivers in horror before flowers—he thinks that flowers are hauntingly delicate like a sigh of nobody in the dark.

I am the one listening to the whistling in the dark. I who am sick with the human condition. I revolt: I no longer want to be a person. Who? who has mercy on us who know about life and death where an animal I envy profoundly—is unconscious of its condition? Who takes pity on us? Are we abandoned? given over to despair? No, there must be a possible consolation. I swear: there must be. What I don't have is the courage to say the truth that we know. These are forbidden words.

But I denounce. I denounce our weakness, I denounce the maddening horror of dying—and I respond to all this infamy with—exactly this that now will be written—and I respond to all this infamy with joy. Purest and lightest joy. My only salvation is joy. An atonal joy inside the essential *it*. Doesn't that make sense? Well it must. Because it's too cruel to know that life is just one time and that we have no guarantee outside our faith in shadows—because it's too cruel, so I respond with the purity of an untamable happiness. I refuse to be sad. Let us be joyful. Whoever isn't afraid to be joyful and to experience even a single time the mad and profound joy will have the best part of our truth. I am—despite everything oh despite everything—am being joyful in this instant-now that passes if I don't capture it in words. I am being joyful in this very instant because I refuse to

be defeated: so I love. As an answer. Impersonal love, *it* love, is joy: even the love that doesn't work out, even the love that ends. And my own death and that of those we love must be joyful, I don't yet know how, but they must be. That is living: the joy of the *it*. And to settle for that not as one defeated but in an allegro con brio.

As a matter of fact I don't want to die. I rebel against "God." Let's not die as a dare?

I'm not going to die, you hear, God? I don't have the courage, you hear? Don't kill me, you hear? Because it's a disgrace to be born in order to die without knowing when or where. I'm going to stay very happy, you hear? As a reply, as an insult. I guarantee one thing: we are not guilty. And I have to understand while I'm alive, you hear? because afterwards it will be too late.

Ah this flash of instants never ends. My chant of the *it* never ends? I'll finish it deliberately by a voluntary act. But it will keep going in constant improvisation, always and always creating the present that is future.

This improvisation is.

Do you want to see how it goes on? Last night—it's hard to explain to you—last night I dreamed that I was dreaming. Could it be like that after death? the dream of a dream of a dream of a dream?

I'm a heretic. No, that's not true. Or am I? But something exists.

Ah living is so uncomfortable. Everything pinches: the body demands, the spirit doesn't stop, living is like being tired and not being able to sleep—living is bothersome. You can't walk naked either in body or in spirit.

Didn't I tell you that living pinches? Well, I went to sleep and dreamed that I was writing you a majestic largo and it was even more true than what I'm

writing to you: it was without fear. I forgot what I wrote in the dream, everything returned to the nothing, returned to the Force of what Exists and that is sometimes called God.

Everything comes to an end but what I'm writing to you goes on. Which is good, very good. The best is not yet written. The best is between the lines.

Today is Saturday and is made of the purest air, just air. I speak to you as a profound exercise, and paint as a profound exercise of me. What do I want to write now? I want something calm and without fashions. Something like the memory of a tall monument that seems taller because it is a memory. But I want to have really touched the monument along the way. I'm going to stop because it's Saturday.

It's still Saturday.

Whatever will still be later—is now. Now is the domain of now. And as long as the improvisation lasts I am born.

And now suddenly after an evening of “who am I” and of waking at one in the morning still in despair—now suddenly at three in the morning I woke and met myself. I went to meet myself. Calm, joyful, fullness without fulmination. Simply I am I. And you are you. It is vast, and will endure.

What I'm writing you is a “this.” It won't stop: it goes on.

Look at me and love me. No: you look at yourself and love yourself. That's right.

What I'm writing to you goes on and I am bewitched.

A NEW DIRECTIONS BOOK

Copyright © 1973 by the Heirs of Clarice Lispector

Translation copyright © 2012 by Stefan Tobler

Introduction copyright © 2012 by Benjamin Moser

Originally published as *Água Viva*. Published by arrangement with the Heirs of Clarice Lispector and Agencia Literaria Carmen Balcells, Barcelona.

All rights reserved. Except for brief passages quoted in a newspaper, magazine, radio, television, or website review, no part of this book may be reproduced in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying and recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the Publisher.

The translator would like to thank Claire Williams and Benjamin Moser for their help and suggestions.

First published by New Directions as NDP1223 in 2012

Published simultaneously in Canada by Penguin Books Canada Limited

Manufactured in the United States of America

New Directions Books are printed on acid-free paper.

Design by Erik Rieselbach

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Lispector, Clarice.

[*Água viva*. English]

Água viva / Clarice Lispector ; translated by Stefan Tobler ; edited by Benjamin Moser.

p. cm.

eISBN 978-0-8112-2072-9

I. Tobler, Stefan. II. Moser, Benjamin. III. Title.

PQ9697.L585A7813 2012

869.3'42—dc23

2012005503

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

New Directions Books are published for James Laughlin

by New Directions Publishing Corporation

80 Eighth Avenue. New York 10011

ALSO BY CLARICE LISPECTOR
AVAILABLE FROM NEW DIRECTIONS

A Breath of Life

The Foreign Legion

The Hour of the Star

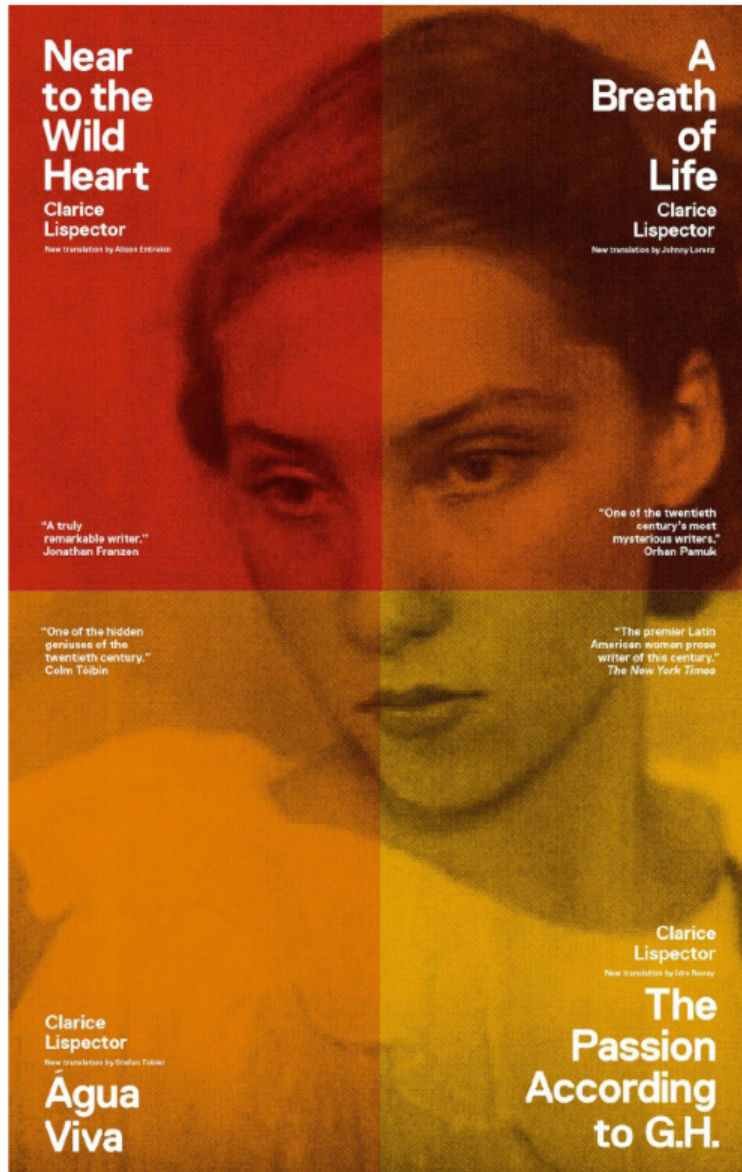
Near to the Wild Heart

The Passion According to G. H.

Selected Crônicas

Soulstorm

CLARICE LISPECTOR TITLES
NOW AVAILABLE AS EBOOKS



"The elusive genius who dramatized a fractured interior world in rich, synesthetic prose."

—*Vogue*

www.ndbooks.com